

# PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE



December/January 1983

The Review of Live Art

Nos 20/21 £1.20 \$3.50

Double Issue

**Psychic TV, Anne Bean, Horse and  
Bamboo, Rhys Chatham, Philip Glass,  
Laurie Anderson, Kitchen Video,  
Performance and Sculpture, Brogue Male,  
Italians, Final Academy, Channel 4,  
Cabaret Etc. Etc.**



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# PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

## The Review of Live Art

Performance in the Third Dimension

Performance Magazine  
14 Peto Place, London NW1  
01 935 2714

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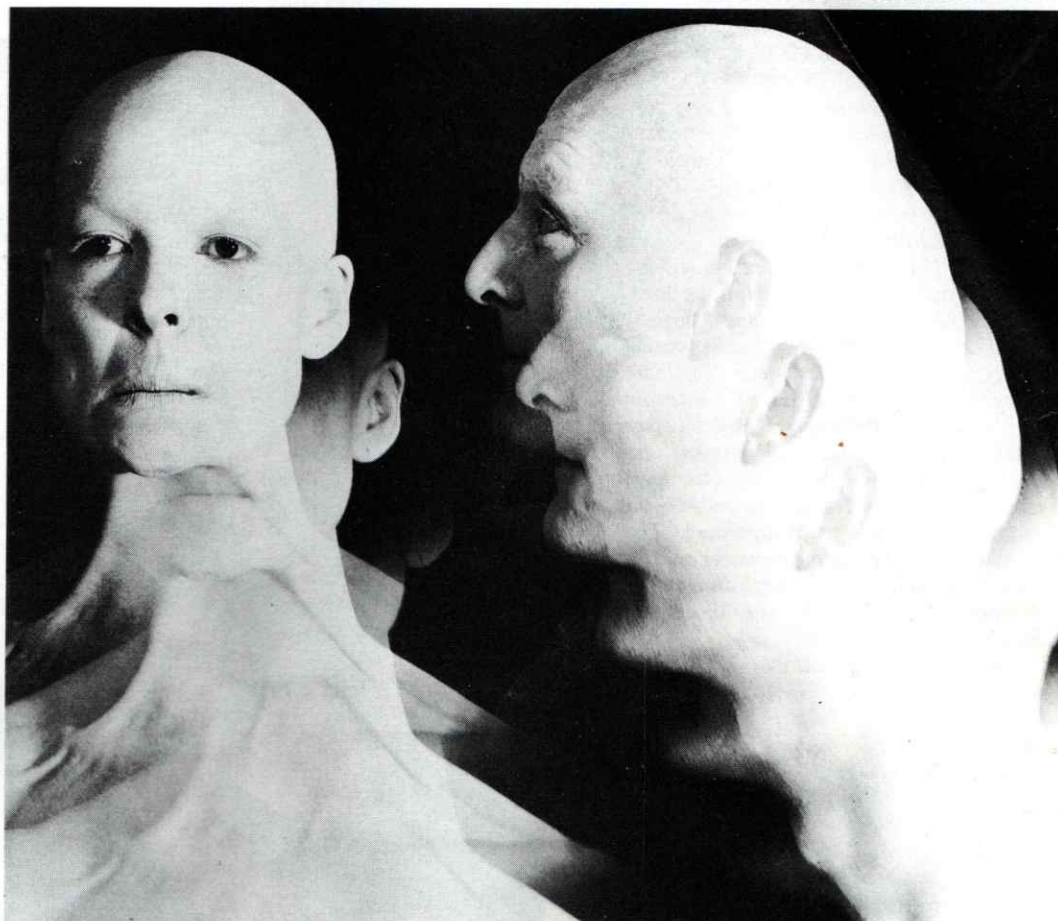
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Rational Theatre

## Double Issue

### Distribution

Full Time Distribution

Moore Harness

J F Ansell

Total Distribution (US)

### Typesetting

Windhorse Photosetters

### Printing

Vineyard Press, Colchester

### Publisher

Performance Magazine Ltd

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ISSN no 0144 5901

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Cover Photo of Anne Bean by Willy Kiddell. Last issues' cover photo for 'Art on the Run' should have been credited to Ray Ridolfi. We apologise for this.



## Anne Bean

Anne Bean's performance work spans the seventies, and continues into the eighties, with an expressive style that has contributed to and complemented the work of numerous other live artists. Her first project, the White Room, initiated by Rita Donagh at Reading in 1970 'confirmed the tremendous joy of art beyond finished object or solo creation. It was a shared voyage... and were the voyagers, explorers and celebrators. A project begun as a life drawing became a drawing of life itself. A homage to vitality.' After being involved in various performances, including Tristan Tzara's *The Gas Heart and Irma*, an opera by Tom Phillips, she joined a loose grouping of artists, Bernsteins, which included Jonathan Harvey, Peter Davey, Malcolm Jones, Chris Millar, Brian Routh and Martin V Haselburg. This grouping toured various colleges and festivals, and with Haselburg, Anne Bean found herself in 1975 entertaining 'Chancellor Schmidt, Henry Kissinger and many celebrities... Portraying two mechanical golden cherubs they blew trumpets with perfectly co-ordinated machine-like movements as each guest appeared. They tricked them into believing they were exquisite clockwork dolls, until they dramatically dropped the angelic facade to run amok...' Bonner Berichte.

A major development was the formation of Moodies, later Moodier, with Hermine Demorlane, Polly Eltes, Judy Nylon, Malcolm Jones, John McKeon and Matt Paddison. This was effectively a precursor of any later involvement of performance art and the rock and entertainment world. A heady mixture of camp, chic and exotic/erotic parody, Moodies enjoyed a brief moment of national and international fame and glamour, appearing in colour supplements and magazine in Britain and Germany, and attracting a wide audience.

It all stopped when Anne Bean, and several others left to join the scientologists. After six months of intensive living and training at their E. Grinstead HQ, Bean left, and picked up the threads of her performance work, principally with John McKeon (McCracken is Flying South) and performed at the Hayward Annuals. She also was involved in work at Butlers Wharf, where she organised the notorious 'Parties'. Through this work she began her current collaboration with Paul Burwell and until recently, the late Steve Cripps. In Pulp Music with Burwell she performed alongside William Burroughs at the recent Final Academy. It is difficult to chronicle her extremely prolific work, (which also included collaborations with the Kipper Kids, Nina Sobell, Hermine and numerous others in the decade). What follows instead is a personal record by an old associate and fellow member of Bernsteins, Chris Millar.



Sally Boon



'Hey water waara  
to you I spurt  
from inside out  
if only you can can  
dance inside me.  
Oh ratz me  
fling me, stir me.  
Shiroop me between your flanks.'

20.7.62

Here is Anne Bean, writing on her 12th birthday. This article is about her. She has asked me to write about her and her work knowing very well that I have seen only a few performances, and these some years ago. We have, I'm sure, no secrets from each other and our friendship goes back to first days at art college. From the beginning we had complete freedom with each others minds and it is, I think, with this idea that she has asked me to put into words what I can.

**'I feel to be black and part of that underneathness. The dancing and singing, and banging. They call me — 'SCORCIANA' — the dreamer.'**  
(20-7-64).

This quotation and the ones following comes from a collection of letters which Anne wrote to herself on her twelfth to twenty-first birthdays. She wrote these letters to be sure that the adult she would become could not be someone quite different.

'I am writing to you at twenty one because of some idea about you being an adult then. I hope you haven't done anything to me to make it so.' (20-7-62).

It may occasionally surprise a person to discover how rational and approachable Anne is by a broad group of people. Whilst alienating nobody she does not agree with everyone. Her position is fundamentally rational. She is a good listener and her consciousness genuinely inclusive. She has few obvious mannerisms of thought. Talking to me this afternoon she said that everyone had as many strange and peculiar experiences as each other. I replied in a way I thought best, that, to have something to say you have to be prepared to be a little wrong.

**'I always remember believing flowers could spontaneously combust. I had a dream where a frog was struck by lightning on a tree, and its skin split open. Its green skin became leaves and its red belly became a flower. The flower grew and its red petals opened wide and when they reached their widest they burst into flame and lightening shot out back heavenwards. I wondered if my belief came from the dream and if the dream came from some shared reservoir and if the shared reservoir came from truth.'**  
(20-7-65).

There is about her a consciousness that goes deep and stretches knowingly back into her childhood. Her work reveals an abundance of striking imagery and originality but it's in a sense outside her, where it belongs.

# A Portentious Event Within Earshot of Braying Donkeys



Jean-Marc Prouveur

With Hermine at Centre Peguy

Within her she's hastening to become lighter and simpler. Using and expending ideas quickly so that they don't become a baggage of the mind and in this way accruing an ever increasing vitality through the alchemy of her work and life.

**'I can say to you that my basic goal seems to be to try to be an ethical or spiritual adventurer, accepting the pos-**

**sibility of being an anti-hero or mis-adventurer. Yet it seems that this thought should remain unspoken — almost unthought; to keep it simply as a twinge in the belly, an undercurrent...'**(20.7.68)

When I met her at Reading it was clear she was making her own universe. This must have been true before; in Zambia. The paintings she did as a teenager have



quite a force and maturity.

**'The squeeze, the ooze, the splash. There it is. A tantalising little worm of red. I love painting. Its possibilities lie nearer my truth than words.'** (20.7.65)

She tells me how she swam in the crocodile infested river, only thinking of the swim and not the danger or the lack of it. She was making a Universe which didn't incorporate the possibility of being eaten by crocodiles.

**'Sometimes when I swim I feel part of water and sun almost like I have disappeared. I am light and heat and liquid and cool and solid and meat.'** (20.7.64)

We often discussed Gurdjieff's 'Being Parktdolg Duty' the concept of conscious labour and intentional suffering. There is much in her work and life which incorporates this idea, the purpose of which is to awaken such qualities as courage and conscience. Obvious examples of this were the two twenty eight day fasts she undertook, and purposefully putting herself in compromising or difficult circumstances. Does her true purpose lie in the colourful artistic display or is she in search of everlasting life?

After Reading University about 1971 - 1972 when she worked with Bersteins, a loosely knit group of artists, it was clear that her empire was somehow further flung and more stable than that of the others. People who entered, orbited her; becoming part of her life, sometimes more than their own. It seemed at times through her generosity, she nourished the faults and excesses of others to consume them for the bright and gaudy images that they provided.

Apart from the Moodies group, her 1972 when she worked with Bernsteins, a of artists were playing a very complicated and esoteric interpersonal and artistic game, in which they each seemed to be more or less consciously suffering from their own delusions.

**'Sometimes I hear your reply coming through the five years. You are as happy and sad as me only with more experience to enlarge them. The happiness is happier and the sadness sadder. Is it?'** (20.7.66)

She rarely engages with any seriousness with the sources of her imagery. The intensity of the image must partly be because they derive from the searching of souls or moralities destroyed.

The lunatic, the pervert, fish-nets, bad causes, blood. It is not that there is anything good or bad about extreme behaviour but she loves such characters for the pictures they present to the mind.

Her warmth is self-evident yet there is a very real struggle to achieve a true humanity.

The image and the actingness are the extracts and chemicals to cause a mixture, a combustion, a rocket to which the sources, the causes and their stories are quite irrelevant. She is not so much interested in sociology as the truth and survival. She said to me the other day that she would not

know enough to do anything vital until she was old, and that's a greatly serious thing to say.

It's not the oddities of creative originality or even opportunistic eclecticism that make the world surrounding Anne her own, but a growing understanding of what it means to cause something.

**'I read mile after mile. I should walk it on legs not eyes. I feel like a caterpillar grossly stuffing in some absurd instinctive belief that Mother Nature won't forget me and I will turn into a beautiful butterfly with precious wings. Maybe she will forget and I'll be forever an enormous caterpillar stuffed with ingredients for the magical transformation but unable to find the key to turn into the beauty and freedom of wings.'** (20.7.65)

John Cage and others talk about music evolving to an acceptance of all sounds and structures: life to a play of all games. Acc-

eptance is the key to perception. We share deeply the belief that you must consider the universe in order to outlive it. There's more than an element of this moving towards an acceptance of all qualities and roles. Her life and work participate with more than a degree of consciousness to spearhead this evolutionary process. It's a useful ingredient when it needs to be invoked.

Spontaneity, coincidence, a desire for the permanent occupation of the present are things well established but even more importantly, there is the basic requirement that she begin with nothing or little. This starting with nothing or little is the touchstone of her research into what it means to cause something.

**'I want to blow the thistledown hither and thither, not be blown as thistledown.'** (20.7.66)

She hasn't the touch of Schwitters or



With Paul Burwell in Thames



Beuys, yet I do believe she has more courage to actually create. Ever since I have known her, she has, out of nothing, created. Moodies came out of thin air with a far higher proportion of acceptance than transformation of people and materials. Her environment and stage props made from rubbishy odds and ends and banquets of Sunday lunches and Christmas dinners from a baby Belling.

**'Between now here and nowhere is only a gap.'** (20.7.67)

Moodies was a bright interlude of light entertainment for the avant garde. The Kipper Kids arrived to laugh introverted old man intellect out of court.

Moodies and the Kipper Kids made us all laugh more than we ever had and showed us friends succeeding, somehow packaging it so the avant garde could accept it. They bridged some of the gap between fringe and popular culture, significantly

stretching the boundaries of enjoyment, adding new nuances to the notes bad and banal on an extended scale of possibility.

After all has been said and done another breeze started to blow. It could all be nonsense and when successful, a sort of rear-guard action. People were giving up or changing what they were doing less because it had worked than a sneaky suspicion it was an unhealthy activity.

For Anne it wasn't; she loved it all, but she was interested to the limits in this self around on going was that dialogue searching searching dialogue that was going on around her. She kept all her friends and gained something in humility. She had done with MOODIES what she had wanted and it had run its term.

We had now to realise that our lives and existence relied upon the philosophies we had hitherto only played with. Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, oriental wisdoms and then

..... Scientology. With initial unbounded enthusiasm she and I left London to join the Sea Organisation of the Church of Scientology for the duration of the universe.

I like to remember Anne, as we got on the train for East Grinstead, the headquarters of Scientology, with her suitcase and new navy blue skirt, and proper shoes. We stayed only six months. It was a particularly dull time for Anne. Much of the work was pointless and embarrassing, such as writing quotas of letters to people who were either not at that address or clearly uninterested — yet a very few people, and a lot of the philosophy, if not all its technical applications, clarified and articulated some of her most important beliefs.

Scientology set out to prove once and for all that 'man' is not a body, and stated that most of what passes for thought is best replaced by creative spontaneous action. Scientology brought a practical drama into some of our wildest imaginings...

We could discuss in a factual way what was hitherto only poetic imaginings. We were sure we could disappear and reappear indeed we found nobody did otherwise — only too slowly. Newton and Aristotle were dead.

**'I enjoy ritual. The eggs in salt water and bitter herbs at Passover. Strife and tears and sadness. The honey for the sweetness and optimism in New Year. Ritual makes such ease with time, stretching back and forwards in repeated annual symbols, dripping with the past and anticipating the future.'** (20.7.64)

Anne left Scientology after giving them several opportunities to show her that it would be better to stay. In the end, rather than face another attempt at 'handling', she left. She has since said that if she really thought it was the truth she would have stayed in spite of its unwieldy bureaucracy. Towards the end of her six months stay she also became very conscious that to progress beyond the preliminary stages required in practice a complete loyalty to the organisation, and this she could not give.

In Butlers Wharf we discussed our reasons for choosing our bodies. She does not totally accept the principle of Universal justice — that there is no injustice, and whilst I accept this principle, I know others cannot. Anne comes very close to adopting a position of complete responsibility for her life including birth.

**'The tyrannical heat, the strident light, the low rumbling sound that seemed to be the sun itself, all breaking into free flow, so my eyes weren't seeing but were what they saw; my ears weren't hearing but were what they heard. Particles simultaneously possessed and dispossessed.'** (20.7.66)

She is advancing from openmindedness to certainty. The main features of her work were mapped out at a time when the urge was only to be free and rid of convention. Now it's a slightly nervous business how to



With the Moodies



handle philosophic certainty, artistically and socially.

I can count on Anne to be there, not to be drunk, to listen and so on. She has a healthy and growing respect for 'ethics'. We did not always realise, (I think we do now I hope with a vengeance) that good anything and in particular good art is a measure and an increase of the artist and his public sanity.

Anne wants to make a profound statement through her life and art. Thus any validity concerns both an aspiration to universality and an admission of personal limitations. The area of possible ground shifting is a movement from a very genuine social generosity to a true humanity.

Some of her assumptions seem to be...

1. To acquire no technique gained by extended practice. (Since it distorts the faculty of the spirit to directly digest experience.)
2. Starting with little or nothing as a facet of spontaneity and causality.
3. Stretching materials and concepts beyond their limits.
4. The inadequacy of language.

In conversation we have recently identified these as the very things which require consideration in order to achieve a genuine validity.

— And so onwards.

Chris Millar

Elisa Leonelli



'I've left Africa, never have I felt in such sharpness the process of leaving rather than going towards, the heavy sad shuffle of something about to meet memory rather than reality. Flight from Gondwanaland. Scorciana's funeral service. Now I will be Scorciana the undead, living in England with secret terrifying information which only endless submission to the sun will reveal. Hybrid mangled secrets Pain rushing secrets. Secrets of red.'

(20.7.69)

I, SARAH ANN BEAN, DO HEREBY AGREE to enter into employment with the SEA ORGANIZATION and, being of sound mind, do fully realize and agree to abide by its purpose which is to get ETHICS IN on this PLANET AND THE UNIVERSE and, fully and without reservation, subscribe to the discipline, mores and conditions of this group and pledge to abide by them.

THEREFORE, I CONTRACT MYSELF TO THE SEA ORGANIZATION FOR THE NEXT BILLION YEARS.



Elisa Leonelli



Harry Hallworth MacDonald died on April 17th 1971, aged sixty four years. His gravestone in the Woolmer Green cemetery says he was 'a good man and full of the Holy Spirit'. As a young man he had left his native Yorkshire and sought work in the more prosperous South. Thirty miles along the Great North Road out of London, he found an old barn which he leased for use as a workshop. A carpenter by trade, he made the occasional stick of furniture and did the odd job here and there but his life's task was the barn in which he lived, worked and died. Over the years, he ornamented the barn with carvings and constructions. Around the top of the house flew 175 swallows while around the bottom ran 230 Scotty dogs, each animal individually carved and painted. Father Christmas could be seen forever in the act of climbing down the chimney while beside him, a cow jumped over a big yellow moon. From the gutters jutted gargoyles or parrots guarding the house while from over in the trees cool yellow angels kept watch over the garden. Seven peacocks made a fence and two giraffes kissed to form an arched gateway. As Harry worked away at his carving, the garden became a village of houses, wells and aqueducts. The visitor's footsteps on certain paving slabs would trigger levers to make chimneys sprout ostriches, dogs wag tails and elephants pour water from their trunks. A single man all his life, he was an eccentric, regarded by the villagers with affection although he could prove to be an 'awkward old bugger'. If anybody in the village upset him, he was rumoured to turn one of his carved ducks on them. A possibly lonely man, he was fond of children, despite their nervousness of him, and he would make a carving for a child's birthday, leaving it tied to the house's dustbin to be discovered in the morning. So for thirty odd years Harry MacDonald created this sprawling, homely mixture of a world, mixing up folk icons and fairy tale characters and animating it with wit and humour. A life size policeman stood in the garden to catch the eye of any speeding motorist. His private and magical world places him with other English artists such as William Blake and Stanley Spencer who were themselves attached to a particular corner of England and to whom the extraordinary arose out of the commonplace. Eleven years ago, he died. His only relative was a missionary in Africa and not been seen for twenty years. The house stood empty, gradually disintegrating until the word came to sell the property. Accordingly, despite protests from the villagers, the empty barn was demolished and the ground sold for building land.

This fascinating and tragic story was told in *Horse and Bamboo's* touring summer production which played around the North of England and finally at

## Horse and Bamboo



Moving to the next performance

Jim Stallibrass

Wolmer Green, not a stone's throw from where the woodcarver lived. Bob Frith, founder and director of H & B, grew up in the new town of Stevenage, not far from Woolmer Green. How did the company come to make a production around Harry MacDonald? 'It started with me trying to become more aware of what my sources of inspiration were. I remembered this cottage from when I was a kid and realised it had had more of an effect on me than I realised. I used to talk to people and tell them of this wonderful place. So one day, we all jumped in the van and drove down here. And it wasn't there. I was just speechless. This marvellous place had been allowed to disappear. So I said I'm going to do a show about this. I was really angry at the time.' How had he regarded this strange house in rural Woolmer Green coming as he did from the new town of

Stevenage? 'There was such a contrast between Harry MacDonald's house with all its richness and variety and this bloody awful environment where I had to live where everything was at right angles to everything else. This place was like a beacon and it made Woolmer Green special. It gave it an identity, part of a whole web that gives any place an identity. I was very conscious living in Stevenage in the early sixties — the new town blues days — that here was an environment that didn't have that web. It's like the patina that's laid down over generations and if you're in an environment that's been bulldozed and started up again, the loss of the richness of that web affects peoples lives very deeply. I'm not a romantic over progress. If people need to build motorways then good luck to them but I can see the destruction that takes place. I can mourn it and do all I can



to restore things. One of the reasons I like living in the North is that nothing is at right angles. There I could see the opportunity and use of reviving legends and stories. It has to be real, though, it's something you can't fake.'

H & B are based in Rossendale, Lancashire. Formed in 1978, they are a collaborative company of performers, musicians and artists. Bob Frith had started out as a successful gallery painter but wished to develop a concept that lay outside the gallery circuit with all its niceties and aloofness. The concept began to develop with a commission to build a replica of a dockyard crane as part of a festival celebrating the Jarrow march in Tyneside. Further to this, Vince Ray, director of the Bede Gallery, invited him to mount a show in which Bob created his own interpretation of the Jarrow march. The success of this environmental show brought him to the attention of the Welfare State theatre company who invited him to work on their first 'Parliament in Flames' spectacular. After two years, he left to develop his own work and

ideas in a situation that would overcome certain problems he felt were in the Welfare State. He wanted a more collaborative working situation and a more gentle, low-key approach into a situation which would not run the risk of alienating a potential audience through the arrival of a fleet of vans and lorries. So a company was formed along collective lines with a policy of touring by horse and cart. Was this not a rather romantic ideal of carefree strolling players? 'No,' says Bob Frith, 'It simply works incredibly well. This summer, the company have been in better spirits from travelling by horse and cart than from trucking around in lorries. It's far more pleasant and an awfully lot cheaper. There's something very deep in British people that reacts to animals. Horses have been a very good softener for audiences.'

The company's first project was reviving the ballad of Ellen Strange, a Lancashire legend, and erecting a monument to her carved from a one ton block of stone one thousand feet up on the moors above Rossendale. 'That wasn't horsedrawn, of

course,' points out Bob, 'It took three tractors to get it up there!' It's still there and has since become an attraction for tourists and visitors. Shows since then have included 'Pictures from Breughel', retelling the story of the painter's life through images from his paintings, and 'The Homemade Circus', in which the animals are played by masked performers. Besides regular events for the Rossendale community, a regular fixture for H & B is the Whitworth Travellers Fair. 'We're the only artists who appear at what is a good old horse drawn travellers fair,' says Bob, 'Although there's Johnny Eagle who swallows chains and has lumps of concrete smashed over his head. Last year, five thousand people saw the burning of a forty foot high wooden horse and this year we built a fire sculpture of a half mile long horse on a hillside one mile away from the audience.'

This year also saw the culmination of the idea that Bob gingerly describes as having been seventeen years in the making. Starting in Telford, H & B began to tour the show of Harry MacDonald's life and





work, 'The Woodcarver's Story'. After playing the show in Scunthorpe, the company headed south and began the two hundred mile pilgrimage to Woolmer Green to finish the summer tour in Harry's village. They approached it with some trepidation as Bob explains. 'We knew all along that we were making this show with two audiences in mind. One audience would never have heard of Harry and would be free just to hear a story. But in the end we were also coming to this place where it was only ten years ago that he died. I thought people might very well be upset by seeing all these masks modelled on someone they held in regard. In fact, it's been quite the reverse. Audiences haven't wanted to leave but have come round the back to shake hands with us and to say what a marvellous tribute to him it is.'

Sunday the 26th September is the final performance of 'The Woodcarver's Story'. Bold painted signs point the way to the field where H & B have pitched their site. A large and battered marquee flaps and shakes in the wind. In front of the orna-

mental tunnel entrance, a crowd begins to gather. Yesterday, in a torrential storm, fifty villagers had ventured out to hear Harry's story and had sat completely engrossed and often moved to tears. The audience sit on bales on straw in the corner of the marquee. There are two playing areas — one to the left curtained off by a traditional theatre style drape and the other straight ahead, a little house with a workbench in front of it. The curtain unrises and the story unfolds. All performers are masked apart from the musicians and despite the masks being fully enclosing and larger than life, there is never a sense of grotesque overstatement nor indeed clumsy expression. Few words are used. Instead the scene is set by a written commentary that unrolls like a roller blind. Harry is seen as a young man alone on Euston station and then walking out of London in search of work and eventually by chance happening on the barn. This action is told by simple painted images that are carried before the audience. He sleeps for the first time in the barn and his dreams

are told through shadow puppets. He moves to the workbench and begins to work with his tools. He splits open a log and miraculously finds a carved wooden angel, a happy indication of his future work. He is seen making friends at the local labour exchange. Lunch at Harry's workshop ends with a happily comic march with Harry and his newfound friends tapping out a tune on files and hammers. Harry is alone again and shadow puppets bring more visions to him: a giant fish, a twelve feet high parson, planes and birds. He models them by tearing simple shapes out of paper and it is as if the scheme for his house begins to take shape. Three washerwomen enter and tell as an interlude the brusque and hilarious story of the house that Jack built. Then to the dreamily gentle sounds of xylophone and violin, the house starts to be built. There seem to be now three Harrys, who bring the two giraffes to form the archway to the garden wall now being made out of glorious peacocks. The yellow moon is put in place and three model houses are brought to



Robin Morley





show in miniature Harry's world. His work complete, he lies down and the shadow puppets show his soul escaping in death. Abruptly a suited man enters, his mask showing the cruel anonymity of a bureaucrat. Armed with schedules and contracts, he has no patience for this pretty frippery and impatiently tears it apart. The little house swings aside and to the roar of engines a giant bulldozer blade creeps down the tent towards the destruction. From the wreckage, a washerwoman finds the carved angel and is left alone to mourn the waste. The show ends on a note of great loss. The audience is left with a deeply moving story that owes nothing to sentimentality. The tragedy of Harry MacDonald's life and work, its neglect and abandonment to demolition, has been all too clearly told.

This is a clarity achieved by working through challenging contrasts. Popular content is conveyed through environmental experimentation. Humble events are told with a mightily fierce expression and tragedy lies side by side with a celebration of beauty. Inanimate artifacts come alive through the animation of human performers. A sense of living and developing tradition runs throughout their work, more than sufficient to rebut the antagonisms towards Live Art of critics such as Peter

Fuller. The living sculptures of masks and the painted images of the setting reveal a strong link with the tradition of expressionist art that runs from the medieval drawings of Grunewald to this century's glowing colours of Georges Rouault. Among the stylistic influences is an eloquently simple style carrying a greater emotional impact than could be achieved through naturalism. The grasp of traditional art forms is such that the incorporation of a time based element becomes essential to sustain the concern for story that is at the heart of H & B's work.

This telling of stories and enactment of legends is neither romanticism gone soft nor the comfortable cushion of sentimental indulgence. The company seem to redress a balance in a world that has found a hopeless substitute for a simple need. The need for story is still slapbang in the middle of modern consciousness but what is offered to fulfill it, a glut of television serials, authorised biographies, drama documentaries and newspaper expose, is merely deadening through its factual literality. Cultures with an oral tradition of story telling have recognised tellers to recount the legends and myths. The tale will often undergo an ad hoc reconstruction to play off the needs and attitudes of the audience. Today a tabloid press unwittingly belongs to such a

tradition and unknowingly debases it's heritage with tales of Midas' riches to be won at bingo, a mighty war fought in a South Atlantic kingdom and the magical romance of a Crown Prince and his perfect bride. The need for story is still here but instead of Jung's 'healing fictions' of archetypal dynamics, every day brings a vast offering of stereotypical aridness, supplanting refreshing richness with the amelioration of a cheap thrill. The raw energy of a newscast is compulsive story telling. Soon a vastly extended TV network will be pandering to the voracious appetite of infantile humanity, cramming yet more junk food of news, sit-coms and chat shows into it's maw in an effort to satisfy the infant's need for models to live by. Why does this sheer quantity indicate the inadequacy of the quality? Consciousness is stimulated only through literal patterns and to compensate for the lack of metaphorical and mythic patterns that give existential meaning. The surrogate story tellers of the modern media resort to either ever increasing specificity (snuff movies, porn video) or fruitlessly chase a mythologising role by offering supercharged portrayals of royalty and celebrities.

H & B make a large contribution in a small way to setting these things to rights.

Phil Hyde



*The woodcarver's cottage at Woolmer Green was once a local landmark but last year it disappeared forever.*



D. Wyn Hughes

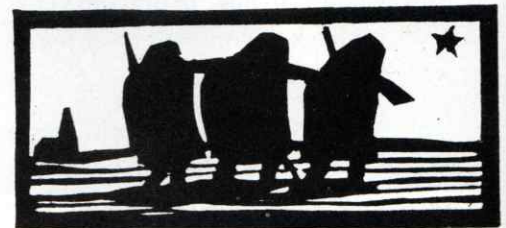
The Woodcarver's Story was created by Amanda Speed, Barbara Nicholls, Bob Frith, Jay Venn, Keith Bray, Mala Sikka, Melissa Wyer, Paul Kershaw and Sue Goodwin.

# VANITY AND COURAGE



# YES!

PETER  
BRUEGHEL  
SAW IT ALL....







We have reached a crisis point.

We are aware that whole areas of our experience of life are missing.

We are faced with a storm of thee fiercest strength known.

We are faced with the debasement of man to a creature without feelings, without knowledge and pride of self.

We are faced with dissolution far more complete than death.

We have been conditioned, encouraged and blackmailed into self restriction, into a narrower and narrower perception of ourselves, our importance and potential.

All this constitutes a Psychick Attack of thee highest magnitude.

Acceptance is defeat.

Resistance is dangerous and unpredictable but for those who realise the totality of defeat, resistance must be thee only option conceivable.

RIGHT NOW you have these alternatives:

To remain forever part of a sleeping world. . .

To gradually abandon thee hopes and dreams of childhood. . .

To be permanently addicted to the drug of the commonplace. . .

Or, to fight alongside us in Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth!

Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth has been convened in order to act as a catalyst and focus for the Individual development of all those who wish to reach inwards and strike out. Maybe you are one of these, already feeling different, dissatisfied, separate from thee mass around you, instinctive and alert? You are already one of us. The fact you have this message is a start in itself.

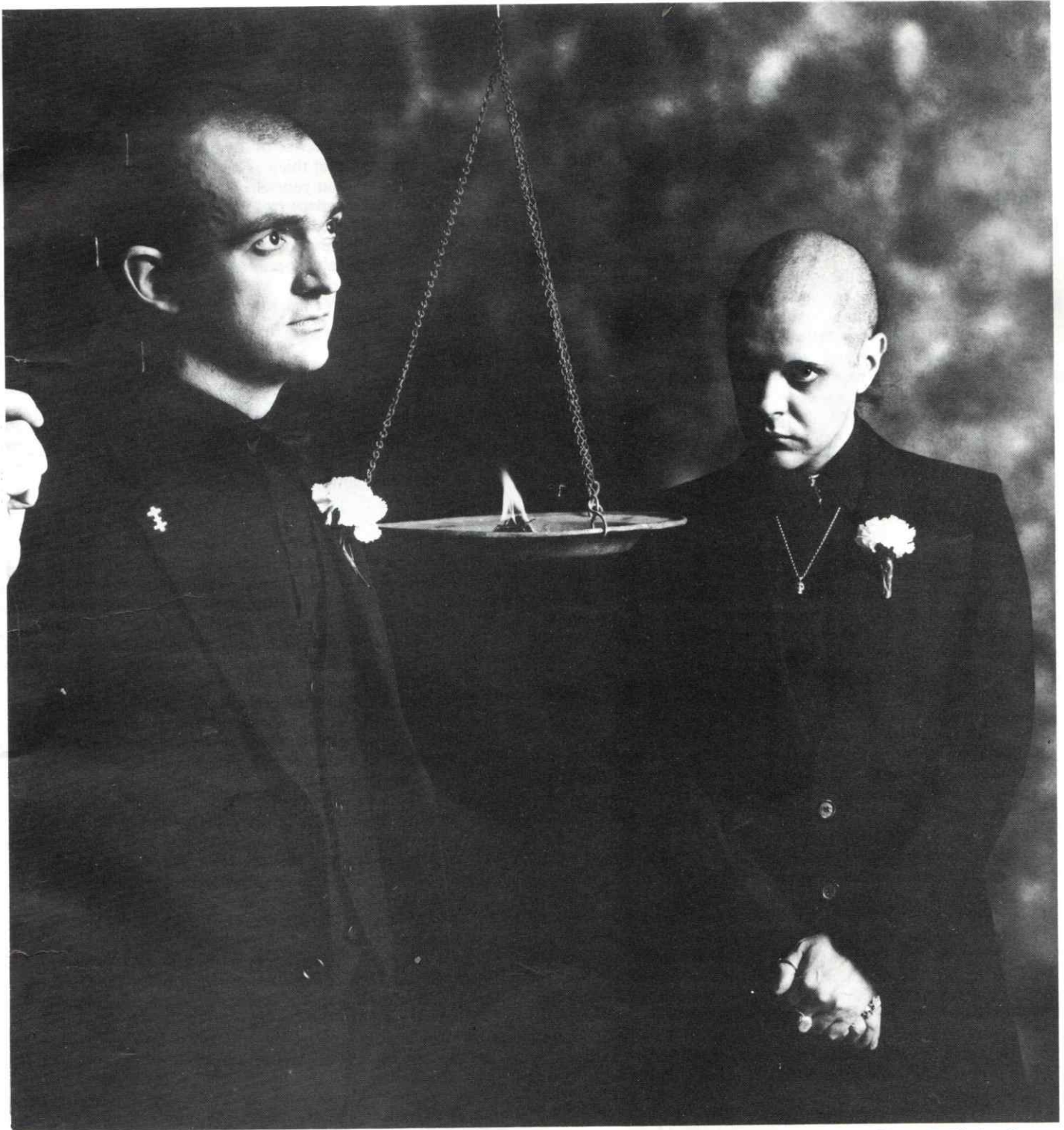
Don't think we are going to tell you what to do, what to be. The world is full of institutions that would be delighted if you thought and did exactly what they told you. Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth is not and NEVER WILL BE one of them. We offer no dogmas, and no promises of comfort or easy answers.

You are going to have to find out your Self, we offer only the method of survival as a True Being, we give you back to yourself, we support your Individuality in which the Spirit and Will united burn with passion & pride.

Our function is to direct and support. Work that is needlessly repeated is simply wasteful. Accordingly we will be making public books, manuscripts & other recordings of our progress, in various formats, video and audio. These do not contain meaningless dogma but are examples of our interests & beliefs in action. They are made not as entertainment, but as experience, not the mundane experience of day to day routine but of the Spirit & Will triumphant.



## Psychic TV



Genesis P. Orridge and Sleazy B. Christofferson

After sending out postcards stating simply 'The Mission is Terminated', Throbbing Gristle, started by performance artist turned rock musician Genesis P. Orridge, was re-incarnated this summer as Psychic TV. It was the public face of the newly formed

Temple ov Psychick Youth, whose adherents shave their head except for a pigtail, wear uniforms and follow the principles illustrated opposite. David Dawson asked Genesis P. Orridge a few questions about the temple, and its views on art, sex, music and religion.



CONVERSATION NOVEMBER 12 with GENESIS AND PAULA P. ORRIDGE.

**David Dawson:** Why a temple, Genesis? The references seem to contradict your ideology.

**Genesis P. Orridge:** They don't really. It's only the abuse of religion which makes people suspicious of the word.

**DD:** It does imply an orthodoxy though, even if benign.

**GPO:** From our point of view it's important to convey a level of seriousness and responsibility, language has its limitations.

**DD:** Do you see the temple in a historical sense? Is it continuing any tradition?

**GPO:** It continues the tradition of the esoteric. It brings the 'esoteric' into the modern age, that is, a new practical whimsical version of esoteric — Modern in references. It is a temple of the head, of the skull — the front part of the brain that's most ignored in recent history.

**DD:** I find your use of the term Modern fascinating, especially within the context of a 'religion'.

**GPO:** Temple (not religion) — We are using the achievements of the modern age to our own ends; TV, the media... all have a potential or rather their negative influence has to be displaced...

Over the last thirty years TV has been the greatest single factor in the control of the attitudes of the people... the prevailing view of the world... has become the accepted 'norm', to which the viewer inevitably compares himself. Of course the world presented on TV bears little or no relation to reality... those interests which shape and control TV everywhere assume that 'the public' cannot cope with the whole truth. It is our intention to reverse this trend.

(from 'An Introduction To The Temple Of Psychick Youth')

**DD:** I'd like to be a little more clear about who the temple is, how it started. Since both yourself and Peter Christopherson were leading lights of Throbbing Gristle, a popular assumption is that PTV & The Temple are a continuation of that.

**GPO:** The Temple is the sum total of the people in it. We are an uncontrolled organism. The Temple doesn't exist as such, it is an unknown quantity — we are investigating it.

We are faced with the debasement of man to a creature without feelings, without knowledge and pride of self... The Temple Of Psychick Youth has been convened in order to act as a catalyst and focus for the individual development of all those who wish to reach inwards and strike out.

(from 'A Personal Message From The Temple Of Psychick Youth')

.....  
**DD:** And Throbbing Gristle?

**GPO:** We follow the laws of inevitability. We don't see any constructive purpose in the traditional performer-audience situation. It only perpetuates the entertainment myth. What we offer is information.

**DD:** Other cults, sects?

**GPO:** They are aimed at the glorification and enrichment of the individual (an individual). We are opposite. Part of our role is to conduct guerrilla action against these cults. They evade the issues society presents us with. Take the whole Jamestown thing: they are against the interests of individual self-knowledge.

**DD:** The image of the Temple, it arouses a lot of suspicion — uniform, insignia, extreme hair-cuts, scars, tattoos — for most people they add up to an archetype of conformity and suppression.

**GPO:** Firstly, it is not a requirement of the Temple to adopt 'an image'. However as a media device it serves us very well. It operates on a number of levels; it's good fun, it attracts attention. If people do feel threatened, then probably they're the people we would like to make uneasy.

**DD:** How do you see yourselves in relation to the wider political context?

**GPO:** In the obvious ways as vulnerable as anyone else, though our unity which is independent of that places us in a very constructive position.

**DD:** In a specific sense though, do you occupy a position?

**GPO:** Well yes, we are a dissident group.

**DD:** Do you have any taboos?

**GPO:** Stealing off friends, rape, hurting animals — no others.

**DD:** You have a Royal Doulton chain handle in your toilet. It's designed by George Tinworth in the 1880s I think.

**Paula P. Orridge:** Yes.

**GPO:** People don't imagine that we'd be sensitive to things like that they expect everything to be punk round here. I believe in the concept of making art functional.

**DD:** I don't think the tape's working. It's a loan from Olympus Optical company so this is a sponsored interview.

**GPO:** All those wonderful gems of wit and sarcasm left forever — Do you think it's your batteries?

**DD:** I checked them out just as we started.

**GPO:** We're probably being opposed. Did you read about it in Brian Gysin's book. It happened to him.

**DD:** I've heard a lot of speculation regarding the Temple involvement with Magical groups.

**GPO:** We don't subscribe to any restrictive orthodoxies. We would only see that kind of thing as a step on the way.

**DD:** But how about yourself?

**PPO:** Gen was involved in a battle. Someone in Sheffield.

**DD:** What happened?

**GPO and PPO:** He died.

**GPO:** You've been set up to ask these questions.

**DD:** Yes.

**GPO:** Are you listening, Rob La Frenais? (laughter)

**PPO:** Is it all right if I go and see Carol?

**DD:** Who's Carol?

(Section deleted).

**DD:** I heard you met when Paula was working at an East End market stall.

**GPO:** That's another myth.

**PPO:** I was working at Tesco's.

**GPO:** Yes it took three and a half years.

**PPO:** My mother had warned me about people like Gen.

**DD:** My notion of art is that it's not some sort of intellectual end game.

**GPO:** At best it's almost psychotherapy for society. We've reached a point where the people who are doing that psychotherapy which is essential, and the true visionary research; are the people who are attacked and discouraged from being artists and the ones who end up hating the notion of art because it is such a betrayal. The pre-renaissance role of art was intrinsic to the belief structure, function in a truly social sense, a craft for information and documentation became the propaganda. The only thing that's art is the way the artist lives. That's all. So a punk could be an artist in a sense, but so could anybody else. Art is just a product. The reason the artists are abused, ignored and humiliated when they're alive is because people still don't understand that the artist is a crucial factor, not the product.

**DD:** An intelligent agency.

**GPO:** That's what the artist is: an integrated, intelligent or even sometimes a completely insane vision of the world's society. The life, their emotions all the facets that make up their personality relation to the world at large. And the products are just a luxury on top which inevitably flow from needing to express that vision.

**DD:** All people really want is stereotypes. There's a lot of confusion on this issue. People keep asking me to explain your use of uniform and uniform hairstyles — symbols and so on.

**GPO:** The most recent photograph taken of members of the Temple showed only two people in uniform; people look for provocation, it's part of our exploitation of the media. We know what we want and how to get it.

**DD:** There seems to be a very thin line between your image as religion or political cult and the reality of yourselves in opposition to those notions.

**GPO:** Ambiguity can be a powerful device. There's so much deception in art products, and in their interpretation, and exploitation that the only thing you can go to at all with any kind of conviction is the artist themselves. We live in a society when anecdote and gossip is in fact very important and exciting and people live that's why the Teaser/Jaws section of the music papers is so widely read. It's because people want to know about each other's lives. I mean why biographies and autobiographies and TV programmes about people's lives are so popular. It's instinctive in people that ultimately you have to go back to the person. And what they do is what attracts



attention to the person, initially.

**DD:** I prefer not to think of you as an artist really.

**GPO:** Me?

**DD:** Yes.

**GPO:** That's because we're closer to being the real thing. And it's been so debased. Now you get the socialists who say that they do community art — which is everybody can be an artist and what they say is correct but the way they go about it is inaccurate. Because if you take our interpretation of it, which is, that it's the people and their vision. And whether they focus upon the ability to have an individual vision or not, is quite a different matter. Because what they do is they try to make people emulate products of a middle class vision of what art is... like they're monkeys who can be trained to do a fucking painting.

**DD:** It's like: Why are you doing it and what are your motivations?

**GPO:** Nancy Kaminski is on television doing her paintings, I watch that a lot.

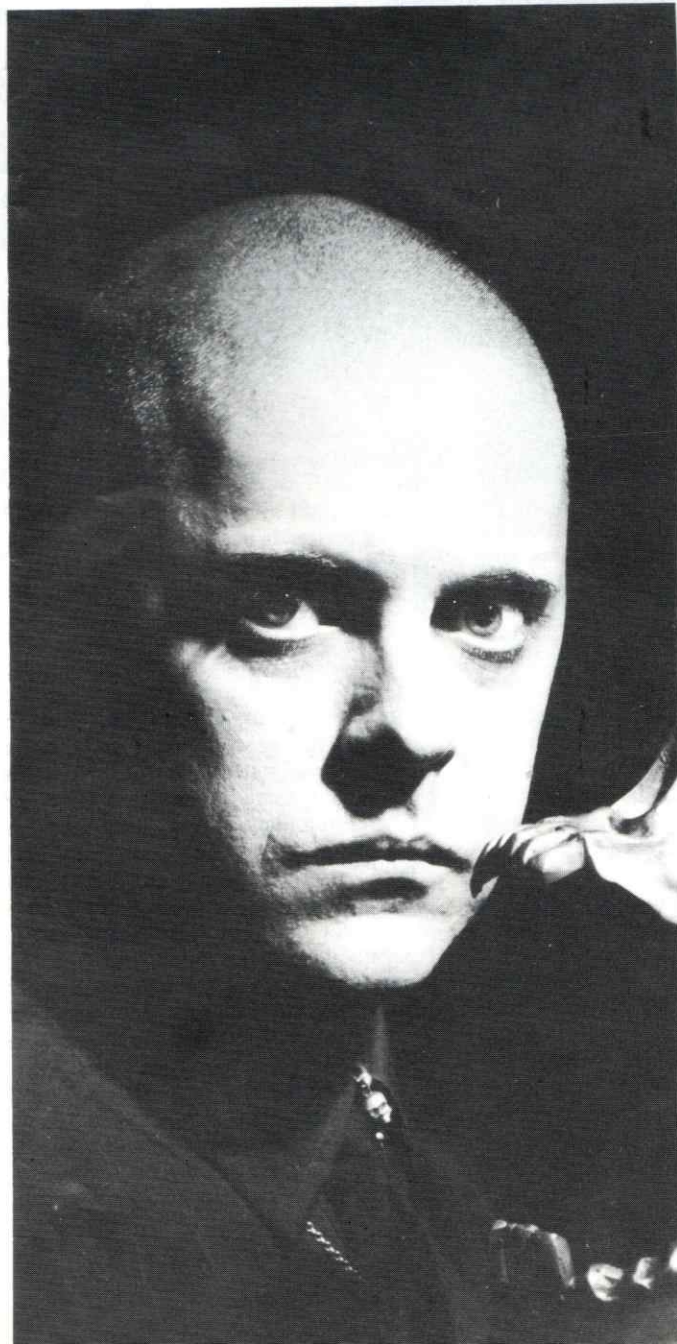
**PPO:** Yeah we watch it.

**DD:** Sex seems to figure prominently as a preoccupation of the Temple.

**GPO:** It is a prominent preoccupation.

**SEX —** Of all the things people do, at home and in private, usually with close friends, sex alone is subject to extraordinary interference and control from outside forces.... Even if only for a few moments, Individuals can release a power and energy from within that renders any system of society, or regime, meaningless.

(from 'An Introduction to The Temple Of Psychick Youth')



**GPO:** ...a true and honest knowledge of one's sexuality, desires, fantasies is essential before one can even begin to think about further awareness. It is where control has its root and suppression at this level must be overcome in order for development to happen.

**DD:** And ritual?

**GPO:** Ritual is and was an essential part of society and the life of an individual's mind. It can be an antidote to media control. No one has seen it before existing alongside technology: we want to reinvest its status in society.

**DD:** It sounds very archaic.

**GPO:** Well only because people see ritual in the context of ancient and primitive cultures. Of course they seem silly from our distance, we have to create rituals which work in a contemporary sense, designed for ourselves.

**DD:** There often seems to be a hint of cynicism in what you say, especially regarding image, your relationship with the media dealings with record companies...

**GPO:** In the wider sense the media exist to be exploited. Our LP's are a way of using existing structures to our own advantage; use what exists and make it work for you.

**DD:** Money?

**GPO:** Whatever we make is diverted back into the Temple.

**DD:** I can't help feeling that there's a lot of intended ambiguity in what you say.

**GPO:** Well you know, you're our friend.

**TELEPHONE CONVERSATION: NOVEMBER 16 1982  
STEVO SOME BIZARRE**

**DD:** I wanted to talk about your role as a music business for PTV. How does it differ from conventional relationships in the rock industry?

**S:** We are not a music business...

**DD:** You're a management.

**S:** Some Bizarre are a state of mind: we're a label out to create not to confirm. I am a magnet which attracts creativity...

In the last 20 years there have been 5 eras of music... conventional instrumentation... Some Bizarre stands for anything which sounds as though it should be automatically dismissed.

**DD:** The music is a secondary concern of PTV.

**S:** I believe in using and abusing. They're destroying themselves and I'm helping.

'A naive person can open his eyes in life, but someone with his eyes open can never end up naive'.

(Stevo from the cover PTV LP Force the Hand of Chance).

**S:** I'd like to see some of that in writing.

'Psychick Television is the public manifestation of The Temple Of Psychick Youth. Psychic TV embraces screenings, performances, its products are Video recordings, publications and recorded work... These 'Public Manifestations' are intended to publicize and disseminate the Ideology and Practice of The Temple Of Psychick Youth. They are not intended as Rock Music, Performance Art or entertainment though they use these forms as some of their means. In response to restrictions and limitations imposed by contemporary society and in opposition to its systems of control over every area of life. The Temple Of Psychick Youth evolved to embrace a new positivism dedicated to the discovery and realisation of the individual's potential. This potential is the residual talent of all people currently suppressed and misdirected by these restrictions and control. Specifically this unrealised potential is conceived as being not only traditionally recognised skills but neglected Psychic Skills, or the residual mind as suppressed in contemporary Western Culture and Society. The Temple itself is not a rigid structure, and does not impose codes or restrictions on its members (initiates), rather it survives because of their continued integrity and mutual trust.'





Chris Harris

Rhys Chatham

# Minimalist Headbangers

Arguably the single most controversial and influential innovation in 20th century music was Stravinsky's emphasis on a strict time, almost primitive, rhythmic structure. The first performance of the 'Rite of Spring' is famous for the riot of indignation it caused, (remember Cocteau's story of the lady with the hatpin?): the rhythm was thought to be obscene. Similarly in the 1960s when rock music became a widespread cultural phenomenon, Christians and parents worried that this new music would pervert the world's youth with its 'evil' rhythms.

Both Stravinsky's innovative work and rock music has roots in the music of non-western cultures. Unlike the western musical tradition the melodic and polyphonic forms of much African music, for example, derive their dynamic qualities from the rhythmic framework within

which the sounds are organised. It is no surprise that a musical culture which shows a marked preference for percussive instruments should have an emphasis on rhythm. Rhythmic interest compensates for the lack of melodic sophistication which is not possible with percussive instruments capable of only two or three tones.

The social role of music in African culture is as a fitting accompaniment to work or for use in shared rites and rituals. In both these activities the rhythmic structures of the music impart a feeling of regularity which is then articulated in regular body movements. Whereas the western musical tradition attempts a 'romantic' stimulation of the imagination, many non-western musical forms by-pass the conscious mind and/or stimulate the body.

A repetitive, strict time rhythm has the

ability to by-pass the conscious mind, the counting of sheep to induce sleep, or the meditators mantra, for example. Yet at the same time it may also activate the body, as with the trance states of voodoo dancers. In both cases the music elevates the listener from the mundane and can even suppress pain or tiredness. Marching music and African grinding songs have precisely this purpose, it stimulates regular bodily movements and pacifies the conscious mind. Undoubtedly rock music performs the same function in removing the listener from a mundane reality. Is it any wonder that the ultimate in strict-time repetitive music, disco, is so all pervasive?

In the late 1950s when artists started to look for alternatives to the dominant conservatism of post-war western culture, they, like their predecessors at the start of the century, turned to non-western cult-



ures for inspiration. One of the major philosophical and artistic movements which came out of this searching was minimalism. This was a movement of scepticism, which sought to reduce everything to simple, indisputable, pure forms. They wanted to restore to western culture a lost sense of human spirituality. Nowhere on this planet needed then and still needs such a reminder more than America. Spurred by this need and also feeling considerably freer from the weight of western musical tradition than anyone living in Paris or Berlin, young American composers found their inspiration and example in the Balinese Gamelan, African tribal drumming and in the purity and spirituality of much Middle and Far Eastern music.

In the record section of New York's famous East/West bookshop you can find amongst the record of Tibetan bells and music to meditate to, records with stickers which say 'This record can actually lower your heating and air-conditioning bills'. You can also find there the records of Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Gavin Bryars and Philip Glass.

Of these composers the one who has made the most impact on the musical world is Philip Glass. For one thing, he has been the most prolific, composing pure, minimalist instrumental works, the music for Bob Wilson's Operas visuels, commissions for Bayerisches Rundfunk and the Netherlands Bi-centennial celebrations, and collaborations with dancers and performance artists. He has also had an important influence on the development of rock and disco music, and produces records for the Raybeats and Polyrock. Yet despite his immense popularity around the world, his prolific output and his undeniably extensive influence he has only once before played in the UK and then on a disastrous Arts Council tour. I would hope that the Arts Council Contemporary Music Network is feeling suitably embarrassed that having ignored the importance of Philip Glass for so long, he should then give such an immensely popular concert at Sadlers Wells under the auspices of the Almeida festival and with financial support from Channel 4. Glass performed his standard touring repertoire which demonstrates the range and development of his work. It began with the early, 'Music in Similar Motion' and went through to the recent 'Glassworks'. Somehow the programme gave me an uneasy feeling as though the early and late work didn't sit happily together. 'Music in Similar Motion' is musically simple, but it builds a dense structure of similar sounds which is as pure and hypnotic as the Balinese Gamelan. It seemed to embody the spiritual strengths of the minimalist creed. 'Glassworks' however, seemed to have fallen under the insidious influence of a banal 'pop' music, a kind of 'Glass plays Mantovani'. Both Glass and Reich have recently confronted the problem of how to take this music forward into the 1980s. They can both be seen as a part of a 'return to content' movement. Reich's recent 'Tehillim' is a setting of a Hebrew psalm, and Glass'

'Einstein on the Beach' and 'Satyagraha' (the life of Gandhi), are dealing with historical and religious themes. But for Glass part of the confrontation has resulted in him taking his music in a more 'popular' direction. 'Glassworks' was released on the prestige CBS Masterworks label, but it was also available in the US on a tape 'specially remixed for personal hi-fi'. (Banalese for Walkman.) The music is great for walking down 5th Avenue with headphones on but in a concert hall it sounded trite and dull. On the other hand the spaceship section from 'Einstein' was a rich and soaring performance. The ensemble's playing not only induced a bodily sympathy, a kind of minimalist headbanging, but it also produced an electrical cerebral sensation like good cocaine. Judging by the repertoire at this performance I am tempted to suggest that Einstein and Satyagraha are the apotheosis of Glass' work and that 'Glassworks' represents a none too successful searching for a new direction.

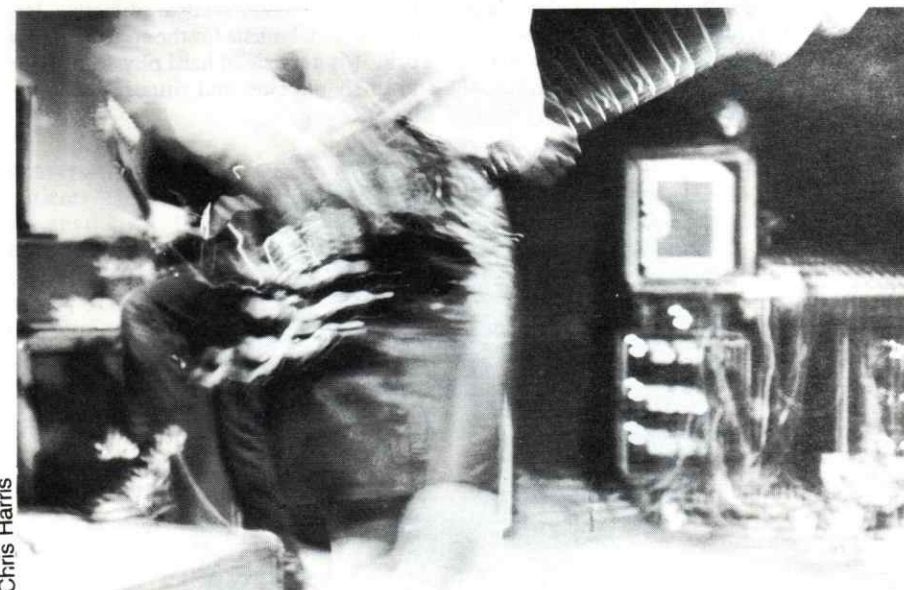
One of the major criticisms of the whole minimalist school is that it allows the musician no freedom of expression. The rhythm is regular, the value of each note the same, the musicians are just machines repeating an exact pattern. Certainly my knowledge of Glass's work on record played on my dansette is of a uniformly flat but nevertheless mesmerising and beautiful music. I was surprised to find that in performance the mechanical regularity has given way to an altogether freer, and more varied, sound with, dare I say it, dramatic

forward to 'The Cameraman', his next major work, and need I say it, to the next visit to the UK.

By 'crossover' I don't mean the RPO's disco hit 'Hooked on Classics' or 'Deep Purple with the RPO'. (What happened to the RPO Plays Beethoven?) The 'crossover' ideology is a natural development from minimalist music. Both minimalism and rock have roots in non-western popular music and it is quite expected that they should have common areas. Whilst Mike Oldfield and Philip Glass are miles apart in many respects they can often sound very similar, as though they have both arrived at the same conclusion by completely different routes. Yet 'crossover' is more than just a coincidence. Given the areas of similarity it is possible that one music can appeal to an 'art' audience and to a 'pop' audience.

In grandest terms it is possible that one music can break down class and economic barriers that divide people. Put more cynically, serious composers want some of the fame and fortune of rock musicians, and rock musicians want out of the rat race of record companies and touring and to be taken more seriously. Whatever the reason, there has developed a new generation of composers whose work attempts to blend popular and serious music.

In this country Michael Nyman has produced by far the most successful synthesis of current influences. Simple melodies, against a tightly rhythmic backing, like right and left hands playing a popular song on a piano, but with the volume, aggressive



Chris Harris

and emotional qualities. That coupled with the organlike resonance of the total sound; when it came to the take off of the spaceship in 'Einstein' raised not only the roof but also the top of my head.

Glass has been reaching an ever wider, younger, and more 'popular' audience. His involvement with avant garde rock, his influence on Bowie, Eno, the German synthesiser men, and disco, and his own experiment with 'Glassworks' would indicate that the direction he is taking is towards the 'crossover' ideology of mixing 'art' and 'popular' musical forms. I therefore look

delivery and shortness of a rock song. In America the 'crossover' music is more politically motivated, wanting very much to break down barriers, both between audiences, and in pure musical terms. Rhys Chatham has been very much at the front of this new movement both in ideology and in his music.

Rhys Chatham was a founder of The Kitchen in Manhattan and has twice been its musical director. He had a classical music training, early on coming under the influence of Glass, Riley, Reich and La Monte Young. Yet also as a kid he grooved



to HM. The music of the Rhys Chatham band is an extraordinary and powerful synthesis of the two. Imagine if you can Glass writing a commission for Motorhead (give him time) and you may get somewhere near Rhys's music. The band is four guitarists and a drummer, and the volume is very high. The music comes very close to the music of Africa. The guitars are used as percussive instruments, there are no melodies, but rather the music comes from the dynamics of the rhythmic structure and variations of time and volume. The sound is hard, loud, aggressive and very pure. The purest possible music is one note repeated at regular intervals. Rhys's music at its simplest, is one discord played by four guitars at regular intervals and at very high volume. Yet the music has sophisticated elaborations on this, not only in the variations of time and volume but also in the way that the sound sets the whole environment vibrating, setting up a complex set of sounds and reflected sounds. What we hear is not only the amplified drums and guitars but also the vibrations of the walls and the floor. It is orchestrated noise.

Just as Glass learnt that pure rhythm based music can be meditative, like the meditator's mantra, Rhys has learnt that pure, rhythm based music can be dangerous and stimulate violent physical reactions like the voodoo dancers. The music of Rhys Chatham contains the threats of New York street life and the violence of a punk gig. With perfect timing an audience member hurled a beer can at Rhys and in response he spat back at his assailant. The tension and atmosphere was electric. Coming out of the concert I felt as though I had just run the gauntlet of a street full of skinheads looking for trouble.

Both Glass and Chatham are tackling the 'crossover' problem of taking minimalism into the 80s. Glass seems to want to write pure systems Abba and operas about religious teachers, as though he wants to split in half and write on the one hand 'pop' minimalism and on the other hand work with more serious content. Chatham is writing one music which combines both 'art' and 'popular' music and has a clear, upfront political content. Glass's presentation is of an ensemble almost motionless in black clothes on the stages of large concert halls and opera houses, Chatham's presentation is of a rock band, pogo dancing, in clubs, bars and small arts venues. As a loyal fan of Philip Glass over many years, I hate saying it, but Chatham's music, its presentation, its politics and its musical qualities, makes the likes of 'Glassworks' seem 'effete' and 'banal'. Chatham is confronting both a musical and a political problem on its own terms, whereas Glass seems to want to approach the same problems from the security of the concert hall, and the label of success.

Glass's music is still beautiful and mesmerising and without him Chatham's music would never have been possible. But whereas Glass is still interested in melody, nice sounds and the rhetoric of formal composition, Chatham through his involvement with HM, has freed himself of these restraints. He is free to fully explore the musical possibilities presented by all musical traditions both serious and popular and can therefore confront issues of political and musical conservatism directly. His music is tribal music for the streets of New York, it is a music of hard physical labour and of shared rites and rituals.

**Steve Rogers**



Rhys Chatham

## Video

'The quick-firing, fast cutting, explosive editing of urban images against a pounding backbeat characterises a distinctive breed of the New Wave of artist's video to emerge from NY in recent years.' So says the ICA publicity hand-out.

This new wave, equally evident in performance and painting is certainly appropriately placed in the medium which has influenced both its content and its form. The fragmented, repetitious, rhythmic nature of the tapes, and their shortness (minutes being an average length) has been attributed to the joint influence of rock promos and broadcast TV. Television attempts to counter the soporific effect it has on its audience by a rapid turn-over of glossy, spectacular or violent visuals — few images stay on the screen for more than a few seconds. The ads that persuade Americans to consume a succession of useless commodities are only slightly condensed versions of the cultural pulp that fills the gaps between commercial breaks. New wave video pirates, snatches of manufactured TV emotion, action, glamour and spectacle. It uses them directly or mimics them or enhances them with all the tricks of advanced electronics. These images are injected with the urgency of consumerism, of high-tension urban living and that particular brand of NY energy which at its worst darts about on surface impressions and not risking a pause for thought, settles for instant cynicism instead. At its best this energy can be manifest as bursts of pure exuberance or leisurely displays of irony stemming from acute observations of our technological age.

Techniques of fragmentation and repetition are not new. Much '70s performance built up intricate collages of sounds and images culled from a range of disciplines and media. Feminist performance in particular evolved an eclecticism that countered the minimalism and specialisms of conceptual art. In this country, video has been and continues to be used as a fragment, an element within the work of performers like Rose Garrard and Sonia Knox.

Video art itself has traditions and it is structuralist video (perhaps more British than American) that originally developed techniques of fragmentation. Repetition and distortions of every kind were used in the '70s to highlight and subvert what was seen to be our passive consumption of broadcast TV. By breaking up the narrative and denying us the pleasure of escapism, structuralists implied that 'harmless' TV entertainment is in fact saturated with hidden ideologies. They identified realism as the vehicle for those ideologies and fractured their images into lengthy blurs, jerky pans across nothing in particular or rapid-fire edits which never allowed any object to be positively identified.



# Video From The Kitchen

Pop Pop Video — Dara Birnbaum



The idea that an audience can be bored into political awareness has been thankfully abandoned, but the structuralists and conceptualists' concentration on form (the content of form) produced some interesting video effects that artists like Laurie Anderson and Sandborn/Fitzgerald have fruitfully exploited. We are now faced with the proposition that pleasure and entertainment can extend our critical understanding of TV culture. This idea was forcefully rejected in the '70s; an art which used say pornographic images to build a critique of pornography was accused of simply producing more of the same. But now even pornography is a serious contender for political intervention.

'My God, I can't take all this pleasure!' laughed a friend as we sat through the first wave of NY New Wave video art from the Kitchen Centre — that great Manhattan melting pot of music, performance and video.

Dara Birnbaum's tapes 'Pop Pop Pop' and 'Kojak Wang' (1979) have been hailed as classics of the new wave. The first tape juxtaposes fragments from soap opera with sequences of ice skating races. The graceful movements of the skaters punctuate repeated excerpts from a dreadfully intense

conversation between a doctor and his patient: 'He doesn't do anything, doesn't say anything ... Its just the way he looks at me ... That sounds crazy?' The narrative builds up slowly as a few more words of the deadly dialogue are released. Extended in this way, the pathos is laid bare, the narrative content becomes meaningless and the result is peculiarly moving. In 'Kojak Wang', a succession of quick edits construct an aggressive rhythm with gunshots, crashing baddies, tough talk and a shooting star absurdly advertising mini computers. Rhys Chatham's music ebbs and flows according to Kojak's lines; these we hear again and again. The violence of the editing and the violence of the content are oppressive. The artificiality that the editing exposes both alleviates and points up the TV violence which is so often absolved of any charge for inciting actual violence. Another tape plays off the plastic personalities of the dumb blond, the wise-cracking comedian and the 'ordinary' people who take part in quiz shows against a disco version of Georgie Porgie Pudding Pie (who kissed the girls and made them cry). The words of the song roll up the screen like an autocue as a bluesy voice takes over the refrain. The tape ends with a beautifully

ironic rendition of Yellow Bird by Spike and Allan Scarth who specialises in elegant off-key harmonies. These tapes and a set of rivetting action-replays of Wonder Woman spinning into her 'technological transformation' are offered as deconstructions, parodies of the manipulative medium that feeds and controls our imaginations. I suspect that this is something of a post-rationalisation. At least 70% of the work is simple delight in technology, in the tricks you can play to disrupt accepted notions of reality. Although critical of its misuses, Dara Birnbaum is nonetheless seduced by media magic. She reconstitutes TV tit-bits into even more ingenious spells that in turn seduce her audience. I'm not suggesting that we learn nothing from these tapes; the dramatic devices and stereotypes the media employ are laid bare by her techniques, but if she intends a clear critique of 'Corporate America's' propaganda, then her work's entertainment value dilutes the message considerably. What her work *does* do is tamper with the great untouchable, that massive media machine which represents an impregnable establishment and at another level conjures up parental authority and the bewildering omnipotence of adults. Dara Birnbaum



manipulates television before it manipulates her. She defies its power and in the same way that children play the dragon or the villain to exteriorise their fears, so too does the video artist dramatise a sense of individual powerlessness by mimicking the antics of a disguised oppressor.

Most of the Kitchen artists use musical soundtracks (this seems to be almost compulsory) and many of them make pieces with musicians or do rock promos which promote both the artist and the musician. The conflict of interests sometimes produces messy, weak or predictable videos. Not so when the musicians are interesting enough to carry the tape. Funky 4 + 1's incomprehensible but captivating rapping sessions and David van Tieghen's wonderful performance drumming the streets of NY work on tape simply because the video artists kept a respectful distance. At the other end of the scale, Sandborn/Fitzgerald's mammoth production of Robert Ash-

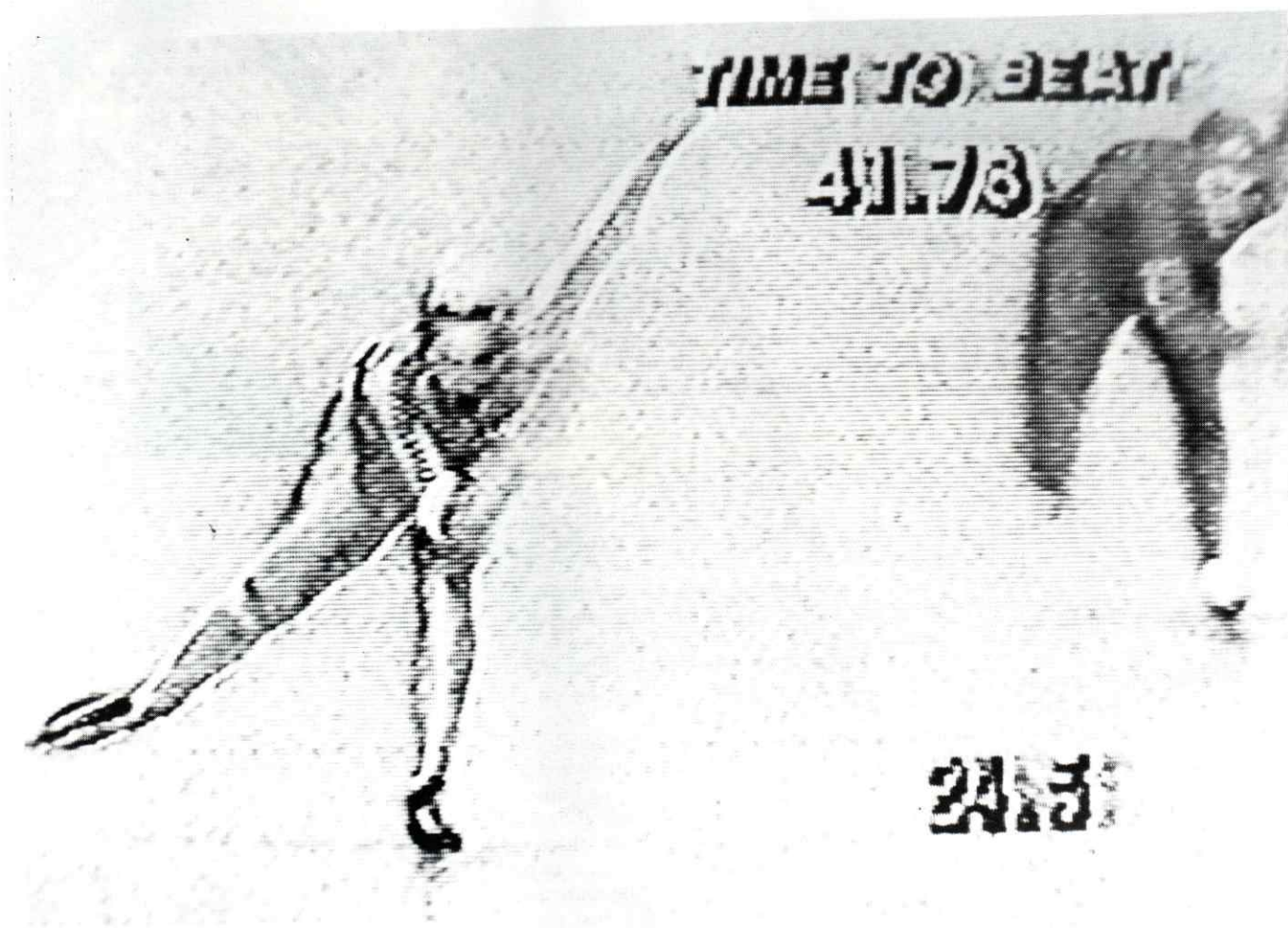
ley's television opera *Perfect Lives* is a sickly blend of the performer's narcissism and the tape-maker's obsession with technological acrobatics — each desperately trying to upstage the other. (In contrast, Sandborn/Fitzgerald's earlier tapes of the winter Olympics are rigorous studies of speed and movement as processed by video.)

Laurie Anderson's tape of *O Superman* demonstrates how necessary audiovisual economy is to the small screen and how fruitful collaboration between artist and musician is most easily achieved when they are one and the same person. A surreal nightmare of the cable invasion by Michael Smith and Mark Fisher provides some clever gags but has the slight awkwardness of a semi-professional TV programme. Television documentary is interestingly reworked by Juan Downey's tape of the Amazonian Yanomani Indians. Vito Acconci's rampant paranoia gets an airing

in 'The Red Tapes' and Ed Bowes shows how irritating gratuitous fragmentation of narrative can be. Altogether the NY tapes demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of new wave video. Narrative has been around in this country for some time now, but the irreverent use of broadcast material and pseudo-soap is refreshingly new. (Of course, the great 'poseurs' Paul Richards and Bruce Maclean introduced media mockery into British performance in the mid'70s and Sylvia Ziranek is its best contemporary exponent.)

I now watch with interest to see what our own video artists make of the American fashion in media-hype tapes. I suspect the interest is already there but judging from the audience's reactions at the ICA, technical wizardry is unlikely to replace ideas, nor indeed will art concepts take precedence over pleasure, imagination, spectacle and straightforward entertainment. The answer lies in the balance.

**Katherine Elwes**



## London Video Arts Show

How do you begin to unravel the work of the nine different artists at this show? Seeing the mood and atmosphere change every quarter of an hour or so does not lend itself to the type of criticism this work requires. There is no way to stop and look at some small detail for a minute, no way of examining the image more closely.

This, of course, is the whole point. The only useful tool for examining the work seems to be when the artist deliberately repeats an action or makes an action so drawn out as to be superficially boring.

Jeremy Welsh's 'Elephant Rhythm's No.2' began the show. Welsh first tripliates himself by using two pre-recorded

performances and two monitors. Then, using an array of small toy instruments, he builds a soundtrack. The star of this performance is not Welsh but a small mechanical rabbit, a drummer. Welsh is a stooge, the straight-man, and there is a hint of the ventriloquist in his manner. Welsh successfully amazes us, both by the



style of the performance, and his apparent ease of delivery. The repetition of himself, and of the action allows us to see the construction of his performance; it's a skill that can't be imparted through this review.

Catherine Elwe's 'Kensington Gore' (video-tape) concentrates on illusions and the skill of creating them. There is a story in the tape but the more arresting aspects of the illustration of this idea come directly off the screen. A man is having a wound made up on his neck, it's a long cut. He wears a uniform and a wig, for story is set in the past. On his face is a real look of pain, and he looks right at the camera. There is a narration by two different people, and this we see being recorded. The studio is dark and mysterious, the two women alternate, swap places.

As different again is Steve Littman's video-tape of a performance by the Impact Theatre Company. Entitled 'Impact Venezuelan Sequence', it races past the eye leaving a taste for the complete work. From it I can only surmise that Littman's flair for lighting is matched by his mastery of the edit. More on Littman further on.

David Critchley's untitled piece was made only a few hours before the show. To the right, a shot of his shoulders and head. He talks about himself to himself, perhaps to us. He says that he is aware of the time that has passed since his last work, that now is the time. He presents us with the image of the artist as the worker who has skipped off, he's sheepish. To the left, his head and shoulders again, but not talking, only the repeated grin, grimace, and, almost, anguish. It's a bizarre juxtaposition; it leaves the viewer embarrassed, and not knowing which monitor to look at. It's what will one day be called a double-one-shot, with no edits, pans or zooms. As a self-portrait it does not do him any real justice; as an insight into your own voyeurism, it is startlingly real.

'An Introduction to Womanhood In The Modern World', by Marion Urch, has a soundtrack of songs with the common link of the birthdays of sixteen-year old girls. The lesson Urch throws at us is that your introduction to the modern world is when people carve you up and eat you. Urch often uses memory in her work; are these memories her own experience? Are they an observation and response to the way men still try to control women, baking them into their own preferred image? The wickedness of the knife used to cut the birthday cake suggests that this is so; but the hand wielding the knife is female, and the girl eats the cake alone.

Martin Gallina Jones gave an untitled performance which I understood to be about one thing only — that people are as different from each other as one apricot stone from another. This interpretation is only a literal reading and cannot be taken as an indication of Jones' ability to create controversy.

'Still Life' by Steve Littman and Zoe Redman is a three monitor installation. These are arranged in line facing the audience. Each monitor sits on a table

identical to the table in the tapes, this supports a bowl of fruit. To the right, an image of the fruit decayed, with flies; to the left, Littman and Redman present themselves singularly, walk on and off, they alternate between taking compliments, insulting themselves, giving insults. The rotten fruit is eaten, laughter and 'Yum yum' mixes with the whining monitors. The still life can be eaten or not, the human being can left to rot?

Akiko Hada's 'The Branks' is another indicator of the variety and diffusion of work made on tape. Hada investigates broken glass, Hada cuts herself. Hada exploits herself and finds a labyrinth; the minotaur can only watch and record. My search for any meaning or theme (which is mainly for the reader of this review) is pointless. In this month's 'Vogue' Jill Spalding notes that with 'Tron', 'Blade Runner' and 'E.T.' — The Extraterrestrial, the look of film is now its meaning. This idea, although familiar to anyone who has followed avant-garde film over the past decade or so, is at last reaching to the industry of motion-pictures.

Zoe Redman's '7 Faces of a Woman' completed the programme. Originally a performance, the piece has now been adapted to video. Each 'face' of a woman is presented in a variety of ways. The woman is not the same woman, or she is a woman with another woman's face. In one of the sequences, Redman stands in a corner; clothed in a raincoat and scarf, with her mask of cuttings from Cosmopolitan — eyes from here, lips from there — listening to an unseen man's compliments, she can't open her mouth to speak. The most pointed part of the piece to me, is where Redman acts as the holiday maker showing the neighbours her holiday slides. The woman chats along, explaining the action, and everyone joins in the fun. Except that the slides are not photographs — they are hand written captions saying 'The candles flickered' or 'It was so peaceful'. The idea I suppose, is that people are not interested that much, or they are looking but substituting their own memories instead.

What I find hard about the criticism of these tapes is that video-art is not television. Television is not the state of the art when it comes to images on a screen. For start, most television is entertainment. Whether it is 'Coronation Street' or 'Sit-up and Listen', the television trains people to stop using their eyes and their minds. The main reason for this is that it is not interactive. Until recently television even programmed the time when you watched it. These points are necessary, even if somewhat obvious. My point is that video-art can't be read in the same way as television. It requires a new way of seeing, and a way of seeing that has to be constructed by the viewer him or herself. Without the experience of seeing many of these and similar tapes, and often, the necessary authority that such a type of viewing requires is going to take a while to acquire.

The answer to this problem is further confused by the width of work that exists

already, never mind the future. What London Video Arts really require is not an annual or bi-annual show, but a permanent exhibition.

Jane Parish displayed some of her color xerox prints during the show. In one of these, using Michelangelo's 'Creation of Adam', God passes Adam a video camera. The implication must be that at some stage, God really did send us the video camera, and He meant it's use to be seen.

Paul Madden

## Performance and Channel 4

By the time you read this issue, the pundits will have made their judgement on whether the much fanfared opening of Channel 4 has been, as claimed, 'the most exciting event in television for a decade', or has been written off as a one day wonder. Be that as it may, the Channel is here to stay, and for a while to come it's going to be the closest thing to a minority interests station that we have.

The Channel crosses interests with **Performance Magazine** in a number of areas, not least in the opportunities it affords for the kind of groups and individuals featured in these pages to grab their slice of the three or more hours of arts programming each week. I will be examining the effects of working across the media in the next issue. For the moment I will be concerned with the fundamental issue of the kind of broadcasting we need.

For the past ten years or so there have been a number of lobbying groups that have sought to influence the pattern of broadcasting, most especially in reference to Channel 4, but also concerned with local radio and Cable TV. Undoubtedly, the most successful of these to date has been the independent producers, who have been revelling in their new opportunities to broadcast. But there has been another broad band of lobbying, composed of an assortment of media workers, neighbourhood media resource centres, community artists and activists, plus a number of those already on the 'inside' who saw the need for a radical re-appraisal of who uses and who controls broadcasting. It might seem that this group would have little hope in influencing what the public gets to see, but this is not entirely true.

In the mid-Seventies, just about everyone involved in media became obsessed with the activities of the Annan Commission on Broadcasting. Television producers were tripping over each other in the race to hoist their liberal colours in anticipation of the Annan Report: rumour was rife that Lord Annan and the assorted worthies preparing the report were going to



# Special Feature

ORDERS OF OBEDIENCE will be the tenth performance by Rational Theatre, and the first to take as its starting point the work of a visual artist — the sculptor Malcolm Poynter.

We have worked from images before; the reconstructed Neanderthal man at the National History Museum led to 'Fossil-face', but we have never before had the opportunity to work from a group of images with the cooperation and active involvement of the creator of those images.

Discussions with Malcolm began early in the year — full time work on the project commencing when performers, director, writer and designer spent a week working with the Japanese Buto dance company SANKAI JUKU. Shortly after this the cast shaved their heads and work began on interpreting in moving flesh and blood the feelings expressed in Poynter's sculptures.

Most Rational Theatre shows are characterised by the dominance of 'internal actions' over 'everyday-world actions'. The world of the shows is one in which the superficial 'realism' of any action or statement portrays in its lack of 'normal' theatrical relationships with other actions or statements, an intention to express thoughts and feelings at more than a merely narrative level.

It is not, as sometimes described, 'surrealism', I prefer to call it 'supernaturalism'.

In practise, this manifests itself as work which seems to unfold in a logical way, although there is clearly something abnormal about the logic; the ideas develop, but the pictures also have a life and development of their own — from a mixture of the two the piece develops.

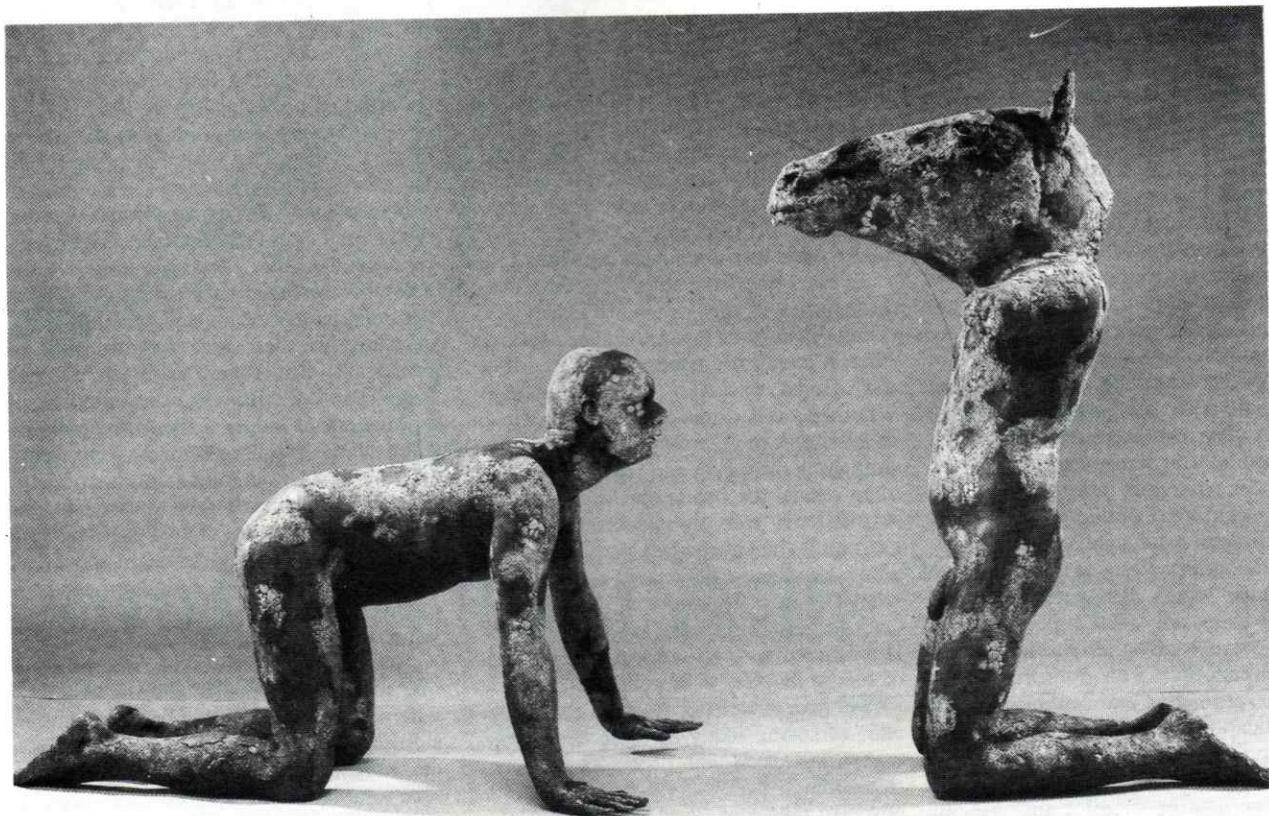
In Orders of Obedience the actors are

without clothes, hair, facial expression — some of the time, words — much of the time; they are reduced to the animal, who behaves instinctively and thinks without having formal ideas. Only in patches does the 'human' appear — the badges of 'civilisation'. And in places the instinctive animal itself has been rubbed away to reveal the organism, the material from which it is constructed, the vegetable and mineral worlds.

The first thing you can say about doing anything is that you do it because it feels right. After that come the ideas, the theories and the techniques.

We begin from wanting to see certain things on stage. These are usually things to be perceived, but when worked upon become things heard, things thought about and written down and then reconstituted, like powdered potatoes. We try to

## Orders of Obedience





# PERFORMANCE AND THE THIRD DIMENSION

avoid this process and to produce work which has not been reduced and reconstituted in this way. In the past the pressures of time and lack of money have often forced us to compromise and rely on a written text much earlier than we would like. In *Orders...* we intend to develop the verbal content in strict relationship to the visual content and transcribe the work rather than prescribe it.

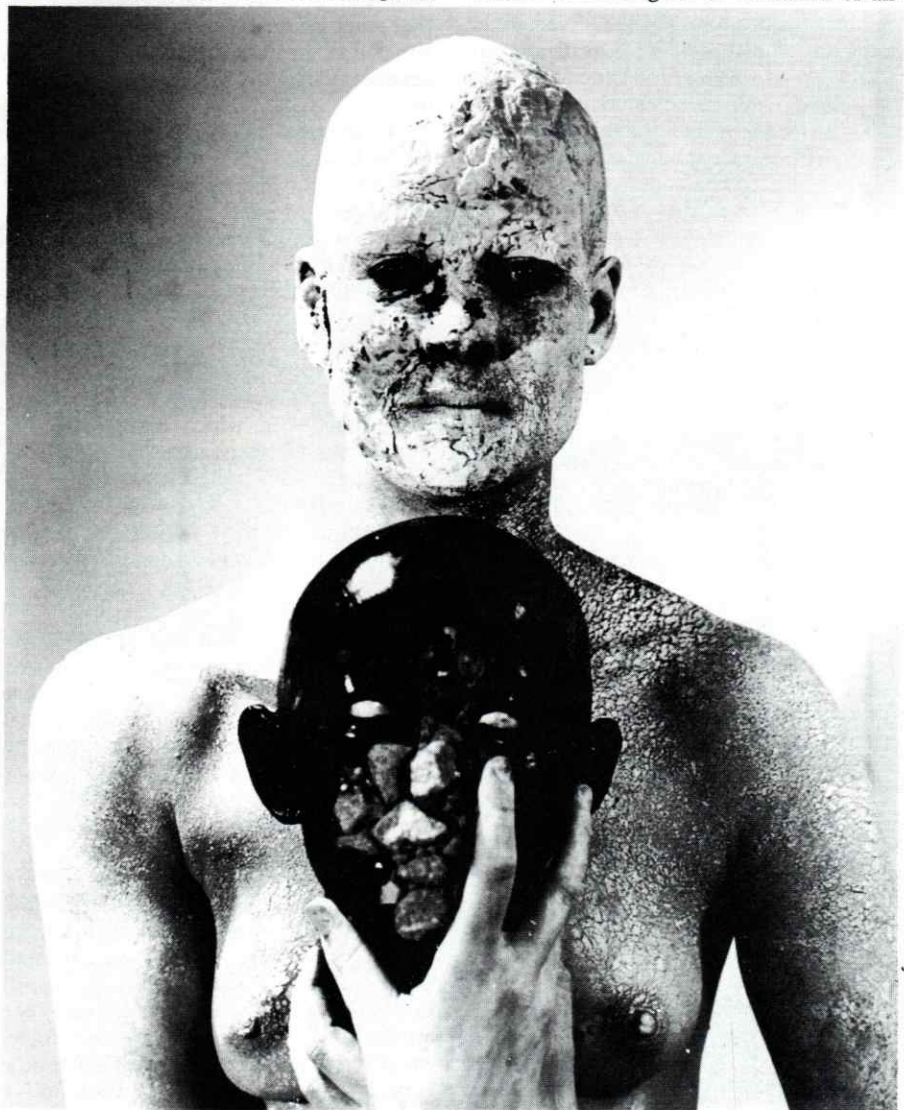
**EXAMPLE:** We might decide that we would like to see one actor carrying another performer in a certain way. We might experiment with passing the carried performer to another performer the foetally curled carried performer might be stood up, walked about, then carried away. This might attract us as a sequence of actions and images. But its meaning could be determined and limited by interpretation in a script that is then used to reproduce it; a mother hands a child to its father who tries to teach it to walk before it is old enough and the child is then taken back by its mother. This has a very different meaning from the following: a creature has found another limp and feeble creature and plays with it. She shows it to another who finds a way of playing with it which is more adventurous. The first creature becomes jealous and takes back its plaything. It may appear to be a reversal of the process of having something to say and finding ways of saying it, but the meaning of the work is drawn from the work itself, and not vice versa. We set out to create a new world on stage, a strangely familiar, simple but alarming place to be explored by audience and cast alike. If we can present the world to the spectator and to ourselves as a fresh experience, we may succeed in suspending received ideas about that world. This escape from normality can be more than merely entertaining relief, it can also be a release from assumptions and a revelation. It is not a question of suspending disbelief, it is more a question of suspending counter beliefs that restrict perception. The focus of the work is on the 'mix' of theatrical elements: words do not get overdue emphasis, but neither do they get anathematised as repressive. Designer, musicians, performers, director, writer, sculptor, choreographer and even lighting designer are involved during the creative process and feed off each other. The material that is generated by this collaborative process is then assembled into the show — the whole company remains involved in this dramaturgical process, although the performers now allow the director, writer, designer etc. to have the final say from their position as observers. In exchange of course the

performers have to make personal decisions about their own performing. The individual roles clarify as the work approaches final production, but never completely, and the shows change considerably even after they open to the public.

There are dangers involved in working from experience rather than dogma however. It can undermine one's ability to hold any kind of political position, ethical standards of aesthetic preferences. Such things are important, but their influence in shaping the work comes in the choice of material, the way it is used and the meaning it generates. We do what we like, in ways that we think right and try to ensure that they say things we believe. The work is defined by who we are and is inevitably the result of a consensus; the team must therefore share an aesthetic, moral and political alignment towards the project, without allowing this

to become dogmatic, thus allowing us to produce not generalised work that says nothing surprising, but highly specific and precise work which has less the mark of idiosyncratic individualism than of collective unconscious. To the critics of 'committee' work we suggest that no individual could have come up with so perfect an animal as the camel.

Theory and instinct criticise, clarify and feed each other. We observe the world, classify it, find general principles, test them, make working assumptions; we also harvest insights, dreams flashes and gut feelings. Our final statements, though never complete, are as close as we can make them to slices of the full truth about the world in its emotional and intellectual richness. This seems to us more truly rational than embracing one aspect of human nature to the neglect or exclusion of an-



Robyn Beeche



# Purgatory- Jim Whiting

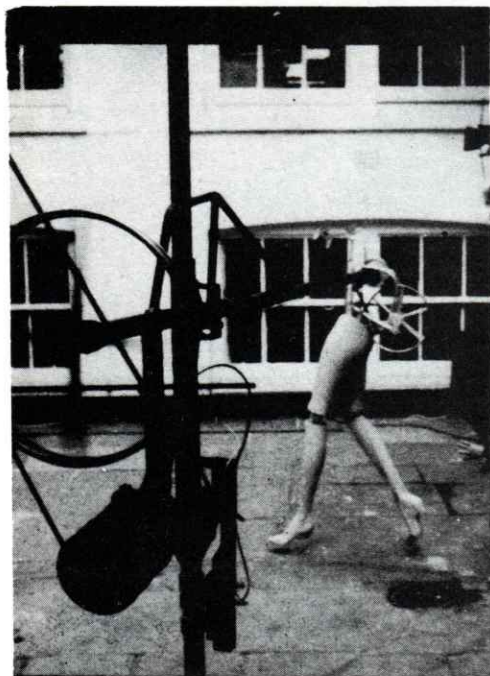
other. It is a rational decision to accept our emotional natures, perhaps also an emotional decision to accept our rational natures.

It assumes that there is no such thing as an irrational act, our lack of understanding may make things seem irrational or supernatural, but as we extend our concept of natural law to include all observed phenomena, we enable ourselves to perceive and understand the universe in more profound ways. There may be more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy but that is because our philosophy is inadequate, always several steps behind our observations. Theatre is one area in which we expand our observations of life and contribute to the expansion of our total consciousness — including our ability to dream. Rational Theatre is not rationalistic, it is holistic.

Peter Godfrey founded Rational Theatre in 1978 and was for a time writer, director and performer. Brian Lipson and Cindy Oswin were amongst the earliest actors to work with the company, in 1980 Andy Wilson joined, taking over as director of productions. Chris Whittingham first worked with the company in 1980, Sarah Sankey joined in 1981 and Alan Brown in 1982. Sandy Powell has designed Rational Theatre shows over the past year. Ros Robins has been the company administrator since the beginning of 1982. New to the company for Orders of Obedience are Chris Bowler and Giles Oldershaw. We also have a number of students working with us on the show: Nigel Prabhavalkar from the Central School of Art and Design and four dance students from the Central School of Dance. Richard Hahlo, also a student, is the assistant director.

Malcolm Poynter is working in close collaboration with the company and is at present making pieces for use in the show as well as contributing his visual perceptions to the process.

**Peter Godfrey**



When I arrived at the site of the installation, a grey Midlands sky had covered the top of the sculpture court. A small balding but youngish figure with metal tipped shoes like the overgrown toenails of cows was clanking around, wordless, peering into boxes, lifting things and momentarily stopping. The stale lifeless air was silent too and the aura of reverence amongst the two-kids-and-a-dog audience suggested that I had missed the start of the performance.

Then the black clad druid spoke;

'I've lost a head,' he said.

'Did it have hair on it?' retorted a quarter of the audience indicating simultaneously her sincerity in looking for the renegade head and her sympathy for a man who was clearly the sort who would go round losing heads, shorn or otherwise. (Looking as if she'd just stepped out of 'Charlie Brown', she later told her companion that what they were watching was no more absurd than getting married.)

Anyway, thus it became clear that I hadn't missed any of the performance and that what I'd mistaken for the aloofness of ritual was, in fact, the distance of an obsessive and slightly absent-minded inventor.

By the time Jim had given up searching for his head and was wheelchaired up to the construction by his friend (Myra), dressed as a uniformed nurse, the crowd had swelled. For the next half an hour or so, the cow toed high priest crawled around 'Purgatory' using the shoes as hooks playing jazz sax and occasionally being attacked by his own creation but enjoying every minute of it.

It was the day after this extraordinary performance (in which his theatre and music were nearly as important as the installation) that I was able to talk to Jim Whiting about his various electro-mechanical devices, although offspring might be a more appropriate word for these objects with which he was little less than besotted.

As we spoke it soon seemed quite clear that; draw parallels with other sculptors or artists or point out similarities with other schools as one might, and I shall; any real explanations for these creations were to be found more in the critical events of Whiting's personal biography than a review of the styles of his predecessors — if indeed such persons can be defined.

In fact he started early. When other children were discovering the age of the train, Whiting was conducting what he called, with boyish enthusiasm, 'phasing experiments'. Something must have happened to Whiting at that embarrassing age when boys get bored with their trains because his mania never subsided and he found himself at university signed up for

electrical engineering although he spent his time drawing. This was a perversity only to be bettered when, later, he went to St. Martin's where his short sojourn was spent making his electrical devices.

At this point he delved into an attaché which was stuffed with papers and re-emerged with a freshly charged gin and a picture of what he claimed had been instrumental in his fall from grace with the famous London art college. Apparently when he first went to St. Martin's he was without a girlfriend, unlike his classmates and so he made what he simply called a wanking machine. Perhaps fortunately, the drawing or photograph indicated nothing more explicit than a pair of disembodied legs and before I could ask whether it worked or not he had started on something else.

Anarchy and Jim by this time had well and truly taken over; at one moment he would be filling me in on his life story and at another he would be illustrating some idea he'd had by pointing to 'Purgatory' or telling me how 'it' was really all about 'seeing people' and how 'things' were 'just beginning to take off'. Whiting himself even looked the archetypal nihilist dressed as he was in a black suit and scarf, a slightly grubby white shirt and a horrible vermilion velvet bow-tie sticking out above the lip of his top pocket.

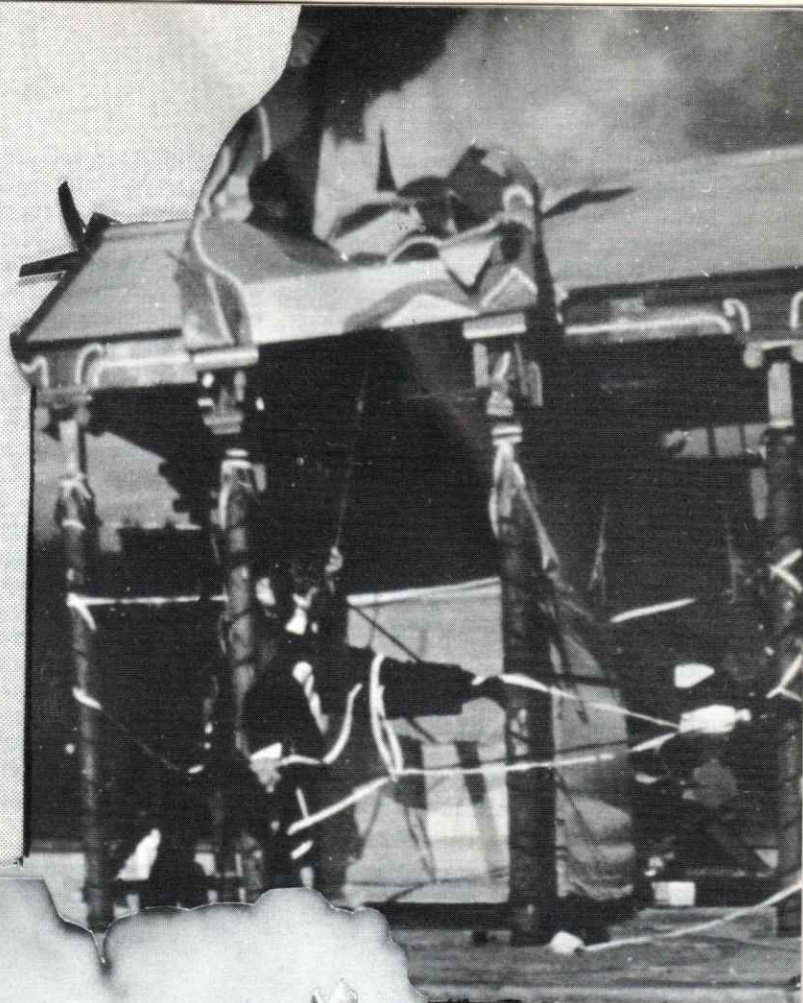
Whiting, however, is too fond of making things which work to be chaotic. Instead, his anarchism is quite ordered. His is the anarchism native to England which means not only supporting the underdog against the weight of authority but also revelling in the absurd. The top half of 'Purgatory' for instance, with its pink foam fly-winged bodiless angels moving in stately circles however surreal is not Dada mixed with Michelangelo. Like the workings of a celestial carriage clock, it is a very funny Pythonesque joke without so much as a sniff of the continental about it.

There is a lot of one man's-battle-against-authority in Whiting. He smiled when he told me about a brief career in teaching at a girls' school where he kept his pupils in order by promising to draw them until he was caught bunking off by the headmistress 'on the other side of town with a lolly-pop in my mouth'. He positively drooled when he described his plans for the 'Dismembered Traffic Warden'. But even he admits to having nightmares and melancholies which haunt his works and make you watch them longer than it takes to get the jokes.

It wasn't long though before he launched off again, this time on fencing machines with 'devastating attacks' as he pointed to another part of 'Purgatory'



# ABDC Workshop





At about lunchtime on August 26th the casual observer standing idly on the Mound would have witnessed a strange if not entirely unexpected sight. A performance was taking place on a raised stage between the columns of a Greek temple-like structure. The structure was a temporary theatre and curious mirror-image of the august institutions that flanked it; the Scottish Royal Academy and the National Gallery.

The Mound itself had been pedestrianised in an attempt by the Fringe Festival organisers to create a 'place' for street theatre. The Mound became an Edinburgh equivalent to the Place de Beaubourg or Covent Garden. The temporary stage acted as a legitimisation of street theatre and as a physical focus for the heterogeneous mix of performances, acts and displays of musical talent. Our hopes for the structure, however, remained unrealised until we mounted our own performance.

The primary intention of our drama was to create a visual spectacle that built on

the architectural and artistic form of the theatre we had built, and, on the space it commanded. The form of the theatre derived from our interest in cultural archetypes — such as that of the 'temple' — which, precisely because they are traditional and architectural, were open to rich and diverse interpretation. By building a 'primitive' temple next to its institutionalised versions we laid bare the theatrical, artistic and ritual origins of the architecture of the Mound. The hallowed Galleries derived from Temple design and the Temple was an original 'place' of theatre.

The inspiration for the Edinburgh project was born of a frustration with the artlessness of contemporary architecture and motivated by the dearth of public life that characterises its presence. The architecture and architectural spaces traditionally associated with public life generally originated in the rituals and enactments of drama and art. The 'temporary architecture' of the stage, public festivals and celebrations used to offer rich opportunities for experi-

ment and appraisal to the architect. The public ART of architecture could be worked out in public.

Today the smell of greasepaint, the sound of the mallet and chisel, saw and axe at work, is a long way from the abstracted, drawing board regulated habitats of contemporary architects. Cultural institutions, such as the Arts Council, assume that the role of architecture as a public *art* cannot and has not been substituted. If architecture is to be a living art it has to be used as such.

We subjected the temporary theatre to three layers of interpretation; the architectural, the artistic and that of the performance. The theatre was open to other interventions and was used, if somewhat meekly, by different groups throughout the Festival. The layers we initiated included the architectural interpretation of materials, proportions, building techniques and architectural mythology; the artistic interpretation of the architectural forms in the fragmented



Ken Turner



sculptured pediment, the wind vents in the roof, the painted surfaces and collage capitals; the dramatic interpretation wherein the art and architecture became animated participants in the total performance. The performance piece was drawn from the idea of the Temple or sacred space and physically brought together the dramatic space of the mound.

The performance began against the background sound of oil drums beating. The paintings on the walls of the National Gallery started to shake. The 'story-line' was simple. The Vices had taken over the Temple and, suspended in harnesses, were cavorting in it's interior. Out in front the figure of bureaucracy cycled an incessant circle. In the midst of his circle stood a lonely symbol of archaic man – a tub of earth.

Suddenly, from behind the fast growing crowd, could be heard the guttural utterances of two savage figures. The crowd melted away before them as they moved toward the baptismal font of

mother earth. Undeterred – if momentarily perplexed – by the machinations of bureaucracy, the savage figures reclaimed their ancient birthright and embalmed their aching bodies with primeval mud (John Innes no.2). Turning to their beloved temple and magic shrine the beast realised with HORROR that it had been possessed by VICE. However the true and virtuous spirit of the Temple was merely hidden and patiently awaiting rescue. On hearing that the two agents of beauty were in readiness, the hand of virtue revealed itself. Ribbons, the instruments of war, were hurled from the Temple roof-top and straightway our savage friends bound their foe into timely knots of immobility. The Vices vanquished, bureaucracy laid low, and peace restored to the hallowed spot, Virtue was revealed and ritual celebration commenced.

The people involved in the Edinburgh venture were as follows: –  
from IMA (the Association of Metropolitan Arts): James Cumming, David and Lauren

Leatherbarrow. Responsible for original idea, architects drawings and project management.

from ADBC Studio Workshop: Ken Turner, Helen Powell, Matthew King, Simon Schmidt. Responsible for building of structure, artistic interpretation and performance – in conjunction with Patti Powell, Mark Pavey, Daniele Minns, Sue Cole, Teresa Carroll, David Ernest and James Cumming. Performance directed by Ken Turner.

Our thanks to our many helpers, Michael Dale and our Sponsors:- William Youngers, Bonar Textiles, Windsor and Newton, Barratts, Ryder Trucks and Roxburghe Estates.

**STOP PRESS:** We intend to repeat the Edinburgh venture in different forms and different venues next summer. ADBC Studio Workshop will be showing a full selection of their work at the Battersea Arts Centre in January, including the 'Mirror' show from the Moira Kelly Gallery (1981) and a new performance piece.  
**Helen Powell.**





# Review



Williams Seward Burroughs has a particular place for the British in his universe, and it's not very nice: 'YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A BANANA REPUBLIC..... You Fabian Socialist vegetable peoples go back to your garden in Hampstead and release a hot-air balloon in defiance of a local ordinance delightful encounter with the bobby in the morning. Mums wrote it all up in her diary and read it to us at tea. WE GOT ALL YOUR PANSY PICTURES AT ETON. YOU WANTA JACK OFF IN FRONT OF THE QUEEN WITH A CANDLE UP YOUR ASS?' (The Wild Boys 1969). I don't know exactly what happened to WSB during his sojourn in London in the sixties, residing in the Bunker in Duke Street St James (the address alone shows how much London must have changed) but he left it with a distinctly bad taste in his mouth. Surprising then, that all it took was a little enterprise, hard work and probably hard currency to get him back.

Things have changed a lot since then. Briefly singled out as a pornographic bete noire and stimulant of fervent and loony correspondence in the Times (the 'Ugh' letters, after the title of a priggish review) the seminal *Naked Lunch* inspired a whole new generation of artists, musicians, academics and anarchists who have since aged and formed a kind of hidden Establishment, an underground force who are biding their time waiting for *something* to happen.

That *something* could almost, but not quite, have been the appearance of the venerable, gravel-voiced gentleman himself in Brixton Ground Zero, the way having no doubt been prepared the previous summer by tech sergeants with recordings of riot noises, breaking glass etc, as another little corner of the Earth prepares to go Nova. There certainly were some classic appearances from the vicinity of the woodwork in the Ritzy, a procession of veterans of various struggles for the soul of the planet. People who ought to have been dead, or married with kids, or both, or burnt out, or become drunks, gone mad, got lost in the Amazon, joined the system, become Scientologists, Satanists, Stalinists or Sufis, got kidnapped by beings from outer space: they all came slowly, blinking down the aisles disbelievingly, wondering how they got Burroughs to Come Back.

The money, said some, meaning presumably money for his junk habit. (Now restarted, probably for good, since as an old man the shock of another cure would not be worth it.) 'I have to do readings. I couldn't live off my income from books.' The pop music magazine *The Face* quoted the above, and derided the Final Academy as an attempt to co-opt him into some morbid new 'movement'.

## The Final Academy



Garrad Martin

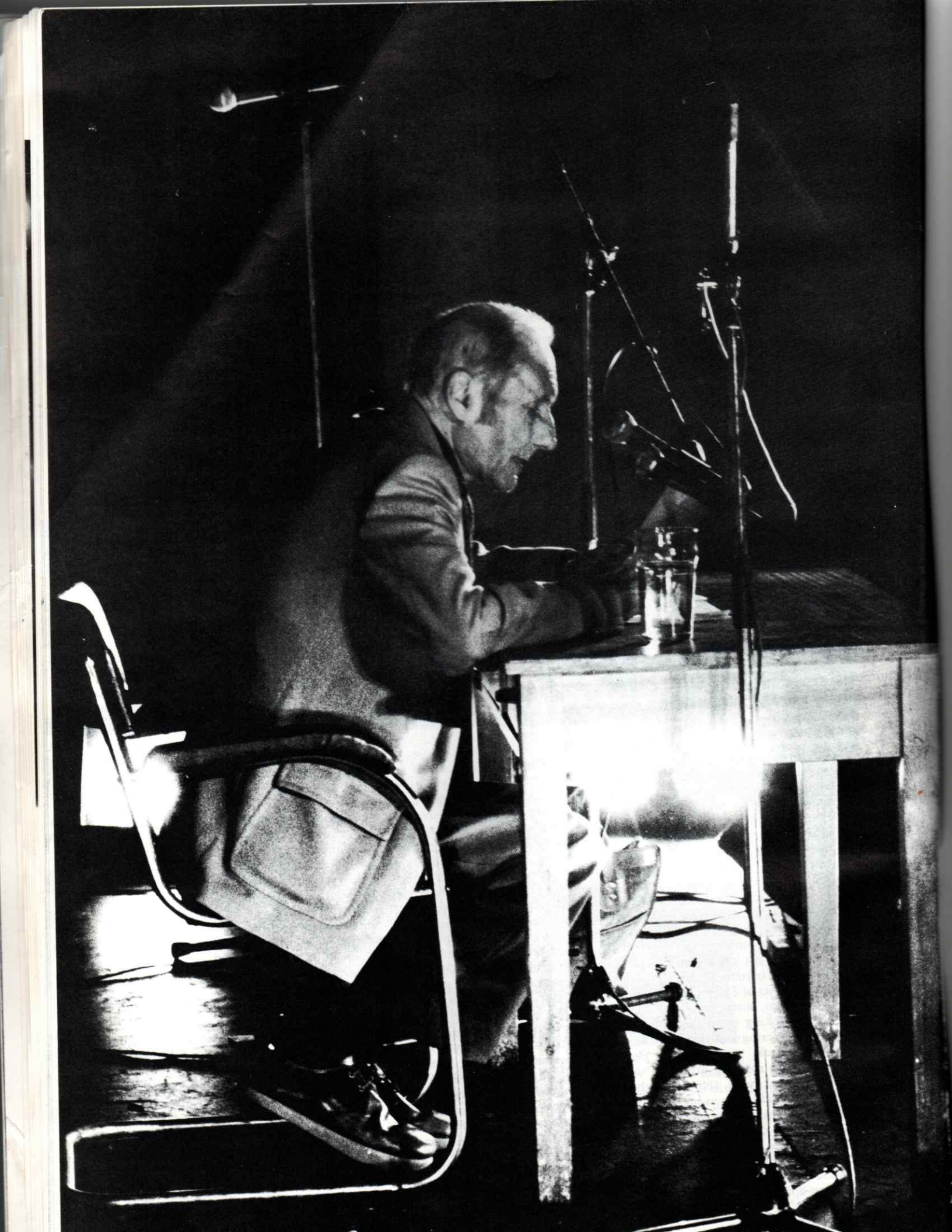
Not so, replied Roger Ely, one of the triumvirate that made up the Final Academy, the organisation that staged the Brixton readings alongside poets, performance artists and rock groups who were continuing the 'legacy' of William Burroughs and his collaborator, Brion Gysin. Bar one evening, he stayed and watched everything. The Face probably had in mind the activities of *Psychic TV*, who ended the series with a '1984' type presentation of propaganda, and whose stamp clearly marked out the tenor of the other bands playing, 23 Skidoo, Last Few Days, and Cabaret Voltaire. Genesis P. Orridge, another F.A. organiser, and instigator of *Psychic TV*, had in fact, through the success of his previous group *Throbbing Gristle*, had attracted a fair crowd of younger people, two generations apart from the 'underground' contingent to the Ritzy, and thus to Burroughs' work. The apocalyptic imagery (or apocalyptic chic, as the Face put it) in the music and visuals of these groups, had certainly been lifted from the ravaged landscape of a Burroughs novel, if perhaps a bit literally.

Although it is customary to think of Burroughs as particularly appealing to the denizens of the spurned London, un-

friendly but natural home of poets, occultists, egyptologists, the British Museum, and bookshops full of Burroughs ephemera; other elements across the Atlantic have also been at play. Recently, for example, along with John Giorno and the performance artists Laurie Anderson, he sold out at the Roxy Marquee on Sunset Strip, Los Angeles. The LA magazine *High Performance* wrote— "It felt to me like the emergence of the post-avant-garde." The magazine goes on to describe Burroughs' appearance on the TV show *Saturday Night Live*; "The cameras zoomed in and held a close-up of his face for nearly forty seconds — longer than old Walter Cronkite, for Christ's sake! What can it possibly mean that this 67 year-old ex-junkie — who accidentally killed his wife with a bullet between the eyes, whose only son and namesake died young of a drug and alcohol-diseased liver, whose entire life's work flies in the face of every Judeo-Christian sense of acceptable conduct — has reached a position where Lauren Hutton can introduce him to a television audience of a hundred million or so as America's greatest living writer?"

What indeed, in a country run at present by the "Do-Right Johnsons", the







Moral Majority, and one secretly suspects, Moonies. But Burroughs has been carefully weaned to the US public by his amenable, the shadowy James Grauerholz, director of William Burroughs Communications. Once thought of as the villain of the piece, another reason Burroughs was kept away from Britain, it now seems that Grauerholz is not only bringing Burroughs back into the public eye, but is also responsible for some of the eclectic settings he finds himself in.

And eclectic the Final Academy was. The roll-call sounded like an impossible dream — William Burroughs, Jeff Nuttall, Paul Burwell and Anne Bean and Ian Hinchliffe. And to some extent it was. Hinchliffe, en route for Canada was represented by a tape (the audience shouted 'Shame') Nuttall arrived at Heathrow from somewhere up north, wasn't met, and immediately got back on the plane (no nonsense from these Brits!) but Burwell and Bean put on an incredible show of pyrotechnics, preaching, pounding of drums, and proclaiming of 'White Mans Gotta God Complex' by the Last Poets. A sample of the late Steve Cripps 'legacy' of explosives had the battery of exotic snappers, video and super eighters, minor celebs and their retinues, scampering for cover, as Anne Bean raged, stamping her feet in the billowing smoke.

On another evening, the manic Z'ev, from god knows where, cracked and zipped across the stage amid electronic and his own stuttering declamation. Impressive for about five minutes, but that's all. Brion Gysin, really a co-star of the whole thing, but eclipsed by the excitement around his collaborator, really needed an evening to himself. Concentrated, he can be very good, but in this situation he came across as rambling and disconnected. He was also being distracted by a group of musicians who played with him. They sounded awful, and reminded me of one of those corny 'experiments' with Jazz-poetry.

Combining with music much better was the extremely demanding and muscular poet John Giorno. Not only would he holler and nag and berate life (from a Buddhist/suffering standpoint) he also yelled most phrases three times. Exhilarating to start with, becoming menacing and celebratory at the same time, Giorno had many people running for the door. I personally thought him quite good, though not repeatable, and was surprised by the audience's negative reaction. It was as if everyone had come for a cool evening, of drily enunciated cynical prose, and were suddenly embarrassed by the heat of Giorno's delivery. The use of James Brown-style backing music at the end enhanced a performance that did occasionally sound like the beat poetry parody in *Heartbeat*.

Terry Wilson read some of his prose-poetry in a faltering, all-too-English manner, and the audience was having none of it, long-time associate of Burroughs and Gysin or not. It sounded interesting to

read, but not really suitable for the event. More Englishness from Roger Ely and Ruth Adams; a story with slides that touched on the mainspring of the event. Called simply *The Legacy*, it was essentially a piece of gothic horror, based on a psychic attack. A woman alone in a house struggles to come to terms with the 'legacy' of her dead father, a student in occultism. Copying one of his rituals, the magic misfires, she goes mad and the 'top half of the house is left to the birds, and the bottom to the cats.'

Of 23 Skidoo, Last Few days, and

While the latest venture of Genesis P. Orridge is definitely of serious interest (see article in this issue) as Anne Bean said afterwards, I personally am neither psychic, nor am I youthful.

And so finally to the Old Boy himself. Was he a disappointment after all the fuss? I think not. (Though to explode a myth, I must risk the charge of showing off by saying that when I shook hands with him, his hand was *not* cold with dry, paper-thin cracking flesh, as has been described.) It's interesting to set off high expectations against an actual event, and mine were

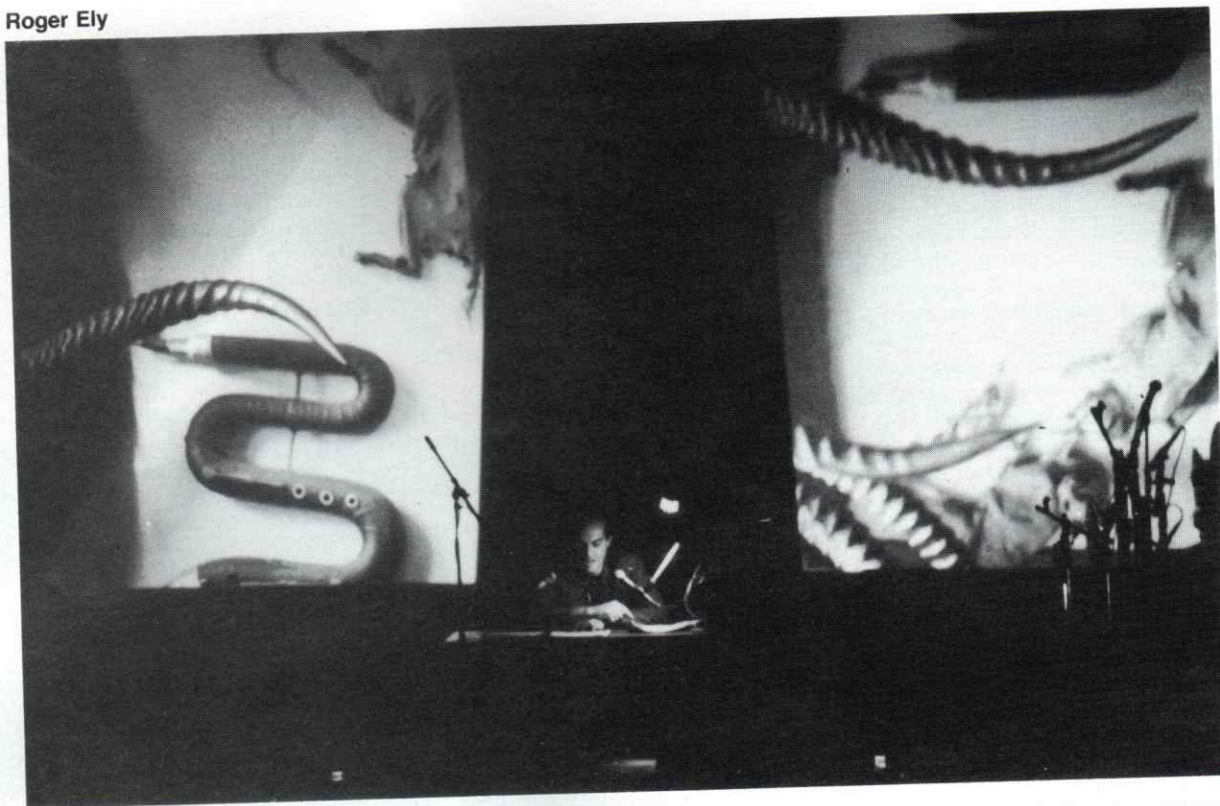


John Giorno

Cabaret Voltaire, I have little to say. All operating in the dark, with electronics and a mixture of post-holocaust and porno movies projected behind them, they all had a disappointing similarity. Of the Temple of Psychic Youth's stylish presentation (Psychic TV) my one thought is: How many people joined up afterwards? Or were they preaching only to the converted?

about as high as one can ever get with a living person. The famous gravelled diction does hook the attention firmly to whatever section of his mythos he is recounting, the Bradley Mr Martins, Dr Benways, Chiefs, Old Blue Junkies, Audreys and Kims of that world blend exactly with his physical presence, as if he is the perfect receptacle for all those





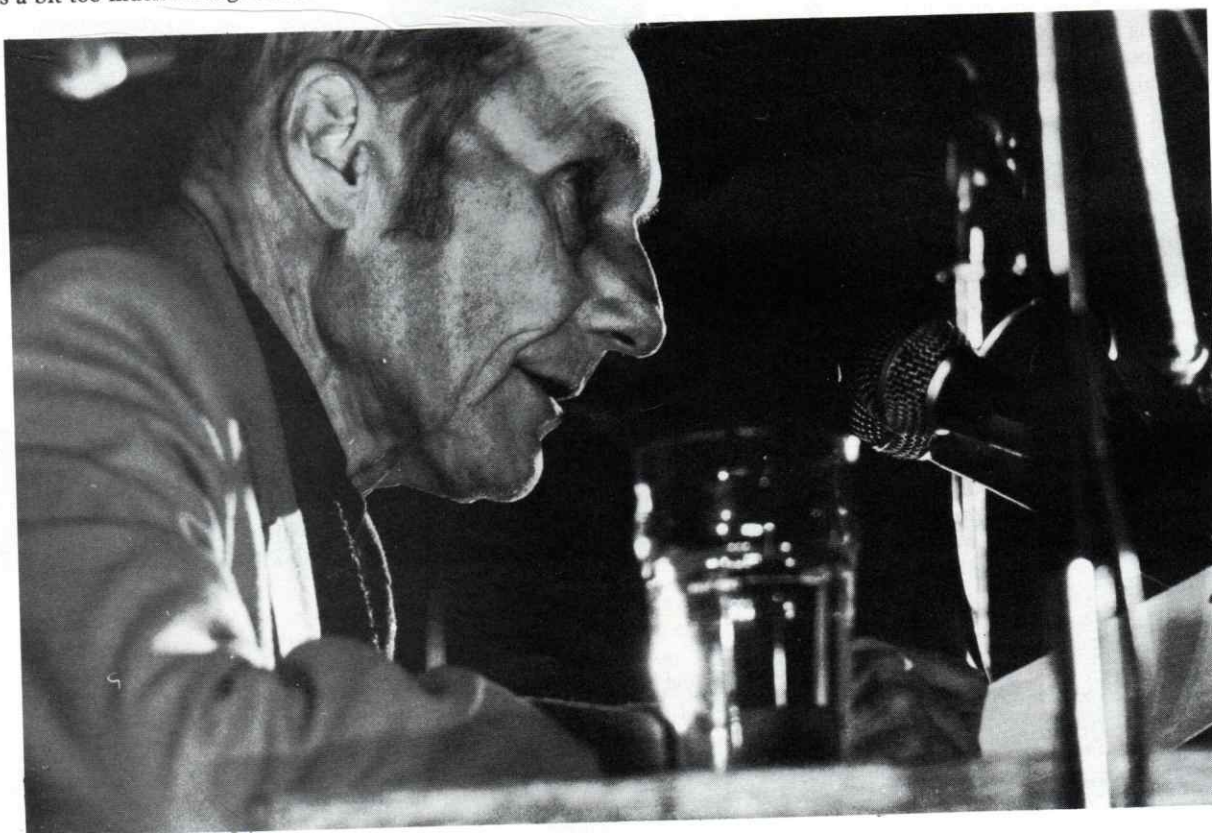
parasitical time travellers and Nova criminals; jumping backwards and forwards between orifices in Mayan codices, back rooms in Chinese laundries and Tangier hotels. He really is steeped in this stuff, he didn't just knock it off and forget about it; it's his whole life and he quite possibly believes he will become immortal through it. He left behind the draft for his latest book, *The Place of Dead Roads*, by mistake in Kansas: he simply set about reconstructing it when he got here. He made perhaps a bit too much mileage out of the

comic character of Dr Benway, people have seen *MASH* enough times to take the edge out of medical horror-story/jokes. But then he's been accused of being too retrospective and self-absorbed. His frank and clear speech, on the first night, about humanity's desire to destroy itself by means of nuclear weapons put the lie to this, and any suspicion of cynicism about the world's potential horrific fate that he describes with loving accuracy in many of his books. For many people in the audience, who had seen similar visions to

Burroughs, whether through drugs or actual experience, the worlds he describes are only too real, and to not ignore them, to dwell on them even, is a healthier and more sane approach than to run away screaming Ugh!

The whole series finished with Burroughs slyly intoning, through the applause, that famous soundtrack of 'History of Witchcraft' 'Lock them out and Close the Door, Lock them out for Evermore....'

**Rob La Frenais**





# Review

## Bursting the Seams of their Gucci Suits

Over the past couple of years there have been tantalising rumours that 'something is happening' in Italy. It is a shame then that the Arte Italiana season arrived at the I.C.A. and Hayward Gallery with so little sense of occasion. Perhaps the recent opportunistic fashion for spotting the next national flavour of the month has proved so disappointing that nobody seemed either surprised or particularly interested in the arrival of the Italians.

The season started with 'Tango Glaciale' performed by the Falso Movimento Company. Against a slide vision of modern Italian designer living, to a text of clinical, art/disco music, three performer danced clichéd vignettes of urban alienation. The perils of crossing the street, arbitrary killings in the crossfire of guerilla warfare; the destruction of traditional bucolic life; the kitchen-sink violence of family breakdown; counterpointed with equally clichéd, palliative dreams of poolside romance and Hollywood stardom. The message is clear; hardedged, designer living is sterile and an outrage perpetrated on humanity and the performers rage against it, finally bursting the seams of their Gucci safari suits in blind destruction and self-destruction.

There are obvious parallels with punk. The youthful abrasive energy; the simple direct message; the obsessive rhythm of the music, dancing and scene and costume changes. And just as punk was as much a violent reaction against the power elite of rock superstars as against social injustice, so too Tango Glaciale reacts against the alienation and class-divisiveness of modern life and against the power elite who dominate the art galleries and theatres.

The difference from punk is that the Italian avant garde has always enjoyed a close and natural contact with ordinary people allowing them to operate their message from within the institutions and without having to set themselves aggressively apart. In particular Falso Movimento speak directly to the young and as the company themselves are very young, they suggest, by their own obvious commitment, an alternative and more valuable form of personal expression than dying your hair pink and buying the latest fashions.

This is theatre of a radical and courageous kind, its energy, commitment and directness makes much of the British avant

garde seem strangely both unnecessarily obscure and ineffectually cosy.

The next company to appear in the programme, 'La Gaia Scienza' shared with Falso Movimento their extraordinary energy and their determined rejection of conventional theatre forms. The performance, 'Gli Insetti Preferiscono le Ortiche', which must mean something like 'The insects prefer the Ostrich', was constructed of a series of mini-spectacles of light and dance and sound. They investigated the theatrical possibilities of almost every conceivable light source, except conventionally used theatre lights, each light source being actively manipulated by a company member. The music however, was taped and consisted of an almost impenetrable blend of what seemed to be arab love songs and African ritual drumming.

It was the dancing however which preserved the performance from being merely an experiment in form. Sometimes improvised and sometimes choreographed the performers shook, jittered, stumbled and arbitrarily flailed their limbs like a tribe of demented ants performing some strange demonic ritual. This combination of non-theatre lights, non-western music and non-mammalian dancing became hypnotically fascinating in the way that physical deformities or the rotting carcass of a dead animal can be. Yet what we are looking at is people, and we are given the impression that humanity is extraordinary freak of nature, as fascinating and yet as incomprehensible as is the teeming flesh of a maggot ridden corpse.

My appreciation of the performance suffered somewhat from my inability to translate the quite difficult Italian used. The translations in the programme were helpful and it is shame that we didn't have them before going into the auditorium. 'La Gaia Scienza' were every bit as energetic and committed as Falso Movimento but they lacked the youthful and abrasive directness of message which made Tango Glaciale as effective politically as theatrically.

An Italian friend once said to me 'How can you say Britain is civilised when you don't even grow Basilico?' There is a wonderful salad they make. Dice together some sweet tomatoes and some mozzarella, add some torn leaves of Basilico, a little oil and salt and you have a simple visually exciting, delicious dish. Try it.

What with Basilico, pasta, and the beauty of the country and the people and now with such good theatre I was all set to pack and catch the first plane to Rome. But there are two other equally well known Italian characteristics, which whilst being the worst kind of bigoted generalisations, will probably prevent me from ever trying to live in Italy. Unfortunately, after an excellent start to the programme, the Nuova Spettacolorita season went badly wrong and mostly through bad organisation and prima donna behaviour by the artists.

The performance by Taroni/Cividin was a fiasco. They kept their audience waiting an hour and then doled out 30 minutes of incompetent rubbish. Any new movement will produce imitators and hopefully with time, luck and the right kind of support some of these will develop their own distinctive voice. This was not the right kind of support. The performers clearly believed that they deserved the respect and admiration of their audience. This attitude is not surprising, after all, they were giving their debut in one of Britain's most prestigious venues, with financial support from the Arts Council and the Commune di Milano. There are many British performers of considerably more talent and experience who would have given their right arm for this kind of support and exposure.

Unfortunately, this was not the only disaster on the programme. Dal Bosco/Varesco who were due to give two performances discovered that they were being paid for their two performances what Torino/Cividin were getting for one and having seen the Cividin performance I am not surprised that Dal Bosco/Varesco decided to cancel one of their performances. I am only sorry that they decided to cancel the one I had planned to see. The programme was finished off, (pun intended) by Antonio Syxty. This was one event that was preceded by any kind of hype, I had at least seen posters around town for it. Apparently Antonio Syxty gets set and costume designs from architects and the fashion world, music from composers and choreography from, yes, choreographers. He then acts as impresario putting all these different contributions together. This particular piece was called 'Famiglia Horror'. The futurist style set was elegant, the music rather pre-



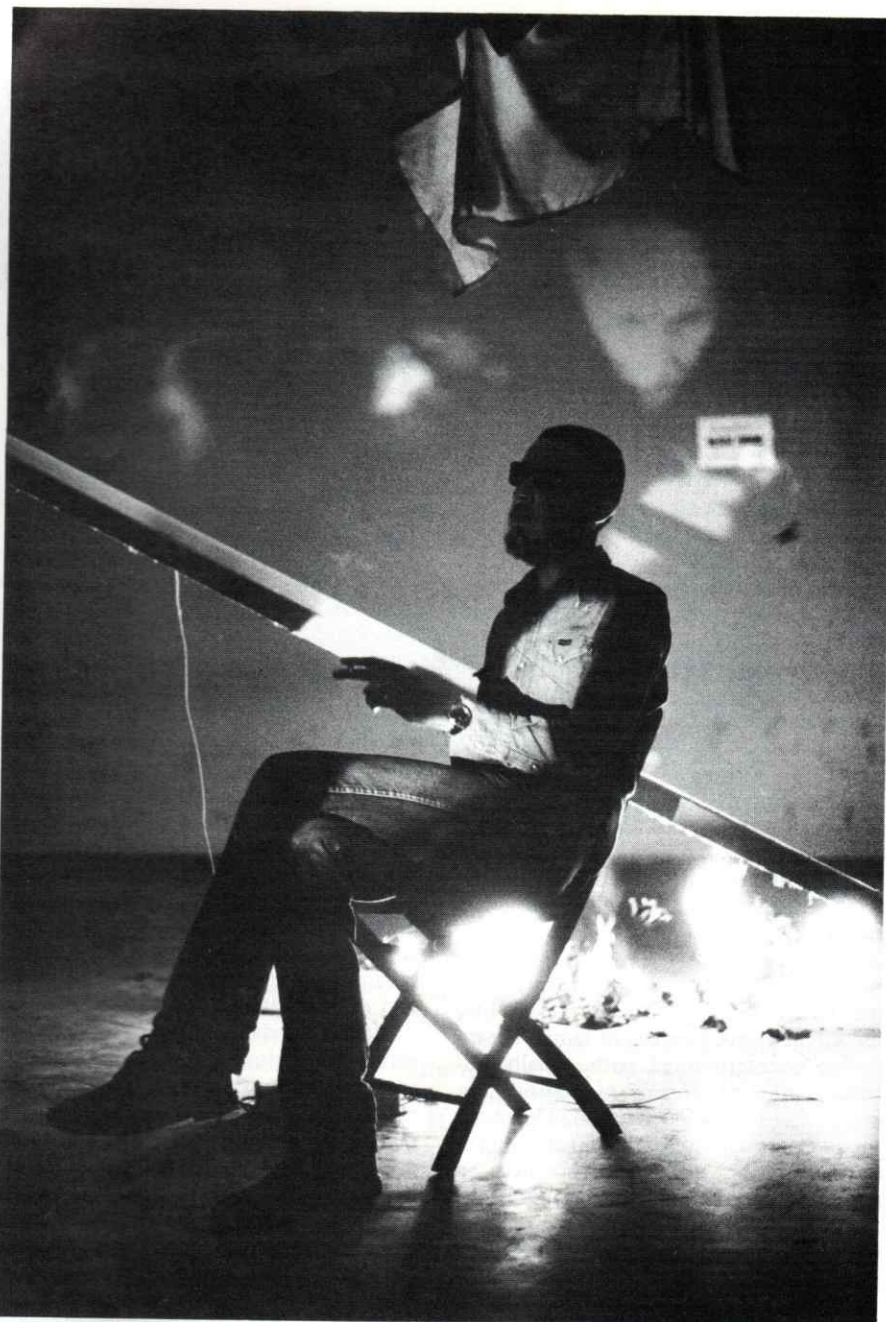
dictable, sounding like out-takes from an old Tangerine Dream album, the dancing was clichéd and the scenario was banal and boring. Five female androids reawaken from a sleep on board a space ship. Under instructions from the 'mother' computer the androids are to create the 'Family Project'. We are told that the project is sabotaged by 'males' and the androids start to experience human emotions and finally one of the androids disobeys the mother computer, so overwhelmed is she by insatiable desires to have a baby, to be a 'mother' herself. The voice over tapes were a rapid banter in Italian and at least added an exotic feel to the performance. Reading the programme afterwards I can only believe that the voices contributed yet more quasi-Freudian, sexist clap-trap that was apparent in the narrative of the performance. As a fashion show it would have been entertaining, as theatre it was trite. The programme notes also reveal that Antonio Syxty founded the Antonio Syxty fan club, *Prima Donna* is an Italian phrase and we need look no further to see why it is in international usage.

The one unifying element of *Nuova Spettacolorita* was the use of elements of post modern culture and, in particular, youth culture. There does seem to be a genuine attempt to come to terms with new social problems through new forms of theatre. There is an emphasis on visual and musical spectacle and dancing, but whether such similarities do constitute a new movement I am not really sure. It would be like saying that the Operas of Monteverdi and of Robert Wilson constitute a movement as they both have an emphasis on repetitive musical structures, on visual splendours, and are both rather physically static.

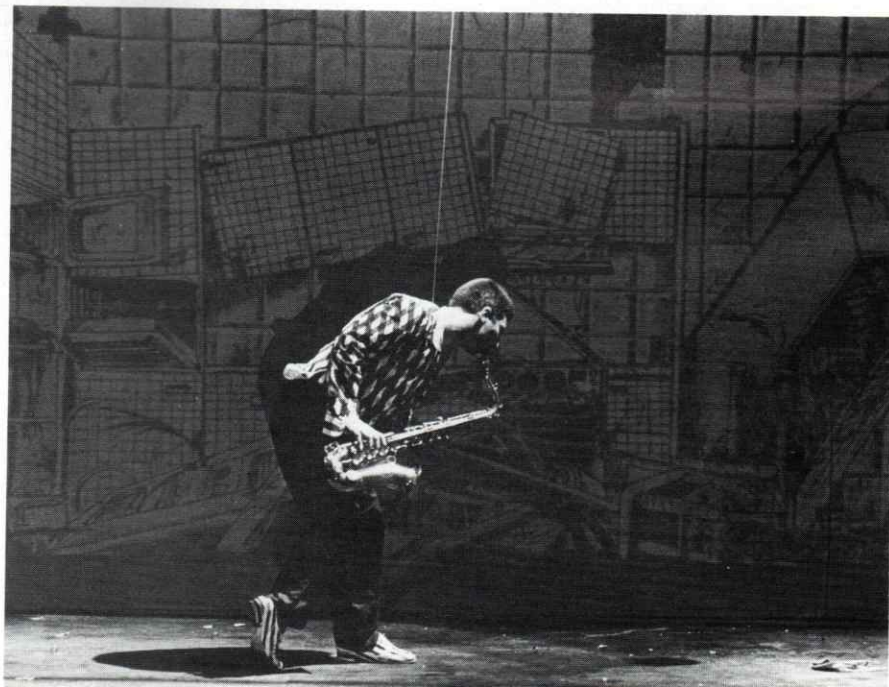
Certainly there are superficial arguments for the work presented at the I.C.A. to be seen as part of a vital new initiative in European theatre. Whilst they looked similar they had completely different things to say, ranging from the simple directness of *Tango Glaciale*, to the amateurish dabbling of *Torino/Cividin* to the reactionary chic of *Antonio Syxty*.

There is certainly and energy and vitality there which I hope will have an influence in Britain, but I hope I am not being nationalistic by saying that the Italians could learn a good deal from Britain about sensitivity and discipline.

**Steve Rogers.**



Silvia Lelli Masotti



Van Dantzig



# Review

## Brogue Male

The casual visitor to theatre might well think that 'Brogue Male' belongs to that category of show whimsically put together by resting rep. actors and trundled out to try and make a few bob on the door at Edinburgh. This hypothetical punter may well think the show worth a look, given its credentials. Raved about by the Daily Telegraph of all things, this 'Smash Hit' of the Edinburgh Fringe was described by the Bristol Evening Post as 'a hilarious spoof' and the Edinburgh Evening News cited its creator, Paul B. Davies, as an 'outstanding comedian'.

As indeed he is. What the casual visitor would probably be completely unaware of is the decade of hard work in performance that Davies has done creating a substantial body of original and disturbing theatre into which 'Brogue Male' offers only a small insight. In 1970 Davies founded the Crystal Theatre of The Saint to develop experimental theatre along the lines indicated by Antonin Artaud earlier this century. By last year the company had done thirty full scale productions as well as numerous events and environmental projects. Extensive touring throughout Britain and Europe had brought them critical recognition but little subsidised support. A complete commitment to experimentation had created immensely powerful shows such as 'Radio Beelzebub' as well as the curious but overloaded 'The Protector'. Often working on the simple principle that things are not what they appear to be, Crystal Theatre pursued obsessional interests in the devil, radio, furniture and the treachery of language. Pieces ended in catastrophe with strobes and dry-ice machines going full tilt. With maroons and flash pots exploding, it was as if the last statement had to be one that blew some invigorating chaos into a four-square world. As the madness and excess of Artaud was courted, there were sights and scenes that the Telegraph critic might not have been so enthusiastic about.

Crystal Theatre are in abeyance now for a year's rest, possibly longer. In the meantime Davies has been pursuing solo work. A precursor to 'Brogue Male' was 'The Shallow Grave' which acquired a cult following when shown on BBC West's popular RPM programme. At present he is collaborating with Dr John Collee, host of a medical phone-in programme for BBC Radio Bristol, on a serial for Radio West and a new comedy show for HTV. Using elements of old material and techniques devised during Crystal shows, they wrote 'Brogue Male' specifically as a vehicle to showcase Davies' talents. Performed in an imaginary radio broadcasting studio, the show is a pastiche of adventure thrillers that have been created over the last hundred years by English writers such as

Rider Haggard, Capt W.E. Johns and others. All twenty four parts and sound effects are performed by Davies in a traditional BBC dinner suit. The script is such that it could in fact be played over the radio but the visual performance of Davies as he switches from character to character is a hilarious cornerstone of the piece. The discrepancy between the sound created and its means of production makes for more enjoyable insights.

The show starts with a traditional recapitulation of the story so far. Deep in the jungle, Sir Digby Spode and his vague and elderly assistant, Carstairs, are about to enter a lost temple in search of the legendary skull of the Laughing Goat Abandoned by their treacherous guide, they enter only to find the skull gone and the door slammed shut behind them. Escaping via a secret passage they see the guide and a mysterious Bohemian fleeing from the site. Fearing for Lady Gwendoline Spode's safety, they return to England where Spode confesses the true purpose of his mission abroad was to clear his father's name in the Laughing Goat affair. On train to Paddington, they encounter treacherous guide and the Bohemian who escape in a tussle but not before they've dropped a valuable clue, a card for the Mammory Club, Soho. Spode and Carstairs visit the dive where the entertainment is provided, inter alia, by stand up comic, Les Basset. In a police raid, the two heroes escape and pursue the Bohemian to a Scottish tourist board office where they discover he is making for Bloodwood House on the Isle of Gray. Hot on the trail, they arrive on the island and discover a secret tunnel leading up into a cellar in Blackwood House. Here they are overpowered by the Bohemian who reveals himself to be a follower of the Laughing Goat cult. The desecration of the tomb by Spode's father can only be placated by the sacrifice of the defiler's first born and anointing the skull with its blood. Spode is strapped to the altar and all seems lost until Carstairs reveals he has a trump card. Unknown he has picked up the skull and threatens to dash it into smithereens if Spode is not released. The two men retreat up the stairs and the skull is thrown down. The cosmic energy contained within the skull is released, blowing the house and devil worshippers to pieces. The mortally injured Carstairs' mind begins to clear and his vagueness is revealed as thirty year's amnesia. He is, after all, Spode's father and so as not to upstage this shattering revelation, dies as any obliging character would.

On stage for a continuous ninety minutes, Davies' performance was remarkable for its stamina and ability. Hugely entertaining, it was doubly fascinating for any Crystal enthusiast to pick out

the continuing obsessions and details. The character of the night club entertainer, Les Basset, is the twin of Chas Barton, the warm up man from Radio Beelzebub, a part which gave the then little known Keith Allen his first taste for the idiom. Both comedians are excruciatingly hack comedians. Both start in fine form and degenerate into psychotic messes. Whereas Barton 'dries' into self pitying weakling crippled by domestic crises, Basset goes over the top in a babbling tirade of paranoid terror at the people in his local pub and at the words in his head. 'Words are thoughts with legs on!', he gibbers until dragged offstage. Both characters are memorable roles and have done a lot for their creators. Allen's impromptu rendition of the Barton routine at the Comedy Store gave him a foothold for a career he has intelligently developed to give him a national reputation. On the strength of this show, Paul Davies could be poised on such an opening.

'Brogue Male' is clearly and deservedly a critical and popular success. Only a purist could object to a performer expanding to reach a wider audience, but as the audience shifts from being one of fringe afficiandos to a more broadly based middle class one, there is the danger of diluting material so as to defer to taste. As the commercialisation of the fringe progresses, both through necessity and entrepreneurial manipulation, it becomes more difficult to find work that convinces through its rawness and energy. As TV talent spotters scour studio theatres looking for novelty acts for late night shows, it will be difficult to refuse the lucrative fees offered even though the antics of Alexei Sayle on 'O.T.T.' serve as a warning. It would only be a gain to see talent such as Paul Davies on national TV. I hope he doesn't lose his direction in the process.

Phil Hyde



# Review

## Urban Art at Top Speed

New York is a wonderful town, a town that's produced, and continues to produce large quantities of high quality art. In the main though, the ICA's New York bash has been pretty disappointing. And for straightforward reasons: of the seven artists included in the **Urban Kisses** exhibition, three of them, John Ahearn, Mike Glier and Ken Goodman, simply aren't very good, and in fact, on this showing, only Keith Haring seemed to justify the promotional excitement.

The real focus of the season though, was Laurie Anderson, whose **Artworks** filled the upper gallery. I can't say I was actually disappointed by this display, because not being an enthusiast, I didn't have high expectations. Which was just as well. Her much heralded and pompously gestated performance *United States* may yet prove exciting and wonderful (and worth the £12 and two trips to the Dominion that it's going to take to see it) but as a maker of gallery objects, Anderson doesn't look terribly strong. What she does look like — because the appearance at least much of this stuff is familiar enough — is a somewhat tardy conceptual artist with a taste for low technology. Certainly there's plenty of hardware to keep us busy: headphones to put on, tapes to listen to, books to flick through, 3D specs, more headphones, even a jukebox.... But is there sufficient content to sustain all this? I think not. A little goes a long way, people keep telling me. But this really is a little. And it's made to go a hell of a long way.

One room of the gallery was a room full of dreams. Pop on the headphones and a recorded voice describes a dream. Each tape recording is accompanied by a fuzzy black and white picture — rather like a film-still edited out just at that moment when the patient says — 'Yes doctor, I remember it all now...' Their identity is scribbled on the picture: *Butcher* or *Student*, the simple nouns that also provide the title of each piece. Sometimes the recorded voice is accompanied by background noise, but typically of Anderson's style, all the ums and ahs are left in. Sometimes the dreams are bizarre, sometimes rather ordinary. Or as ordinary as dreams ever get. Certainly these pieces tend towards the ordinary. Because what each of the sets gives us; the picture, the bland flat identifying noun, the reported dream, the sound of the voice; what it gives us is that sensation which might accompany hearing a real dream reported, that things aren't adding up, that they don't make sense.

And this of course isn't just the central subject matter of Anderson's work but one that recurs in the work of most of the artists included in this ICA season. And the reason for this, we are asked to believe, is because this is urban art at top speed, art produced when technology really gets high, the art of post-modern New York City, the art of the cultural capital of the world as it gets dangerously close to falling off the edge.... the phone rings, a truck rumbles below the window, the TV flickers, in the next apartment somebody gets knifed, the

icebox hums, an ambulance goes whooping along the street, a child screams ..... the New York artist is savaged by experience but (post Cage, post Warhol) life goes on and, with a shrug and a 'So what?' Anderson focusses on its bland details.

O.K., but what's dissatisfying is that 'So what?' was exactly the question that much of Laurie Anderson's work left me asking. Staying sane in New York City may well mean coping with insidious pressure rather than taking individual pleasures, letting things wash over you, adopting a defensive neutrality, then they can't really be thought of as very good.

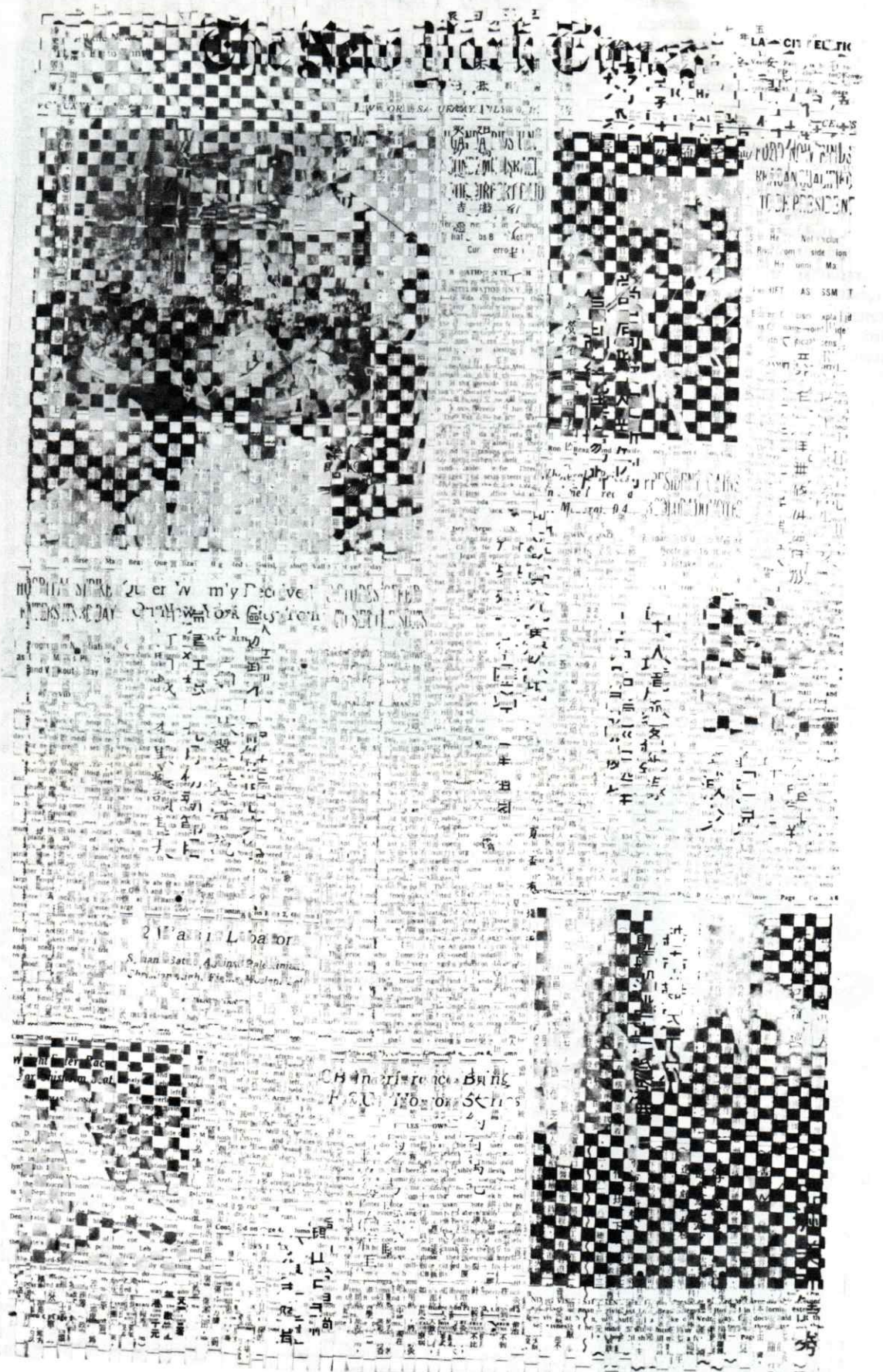
Of course Anderson's work doesn't entirely lack wit or imagination. Something as simple as **New York Times Horizontal**, **China Times Vertical** makes that obvious. But this piece succeeds because it manages to draw its physical form into the joke. It may be 'about' the incomprehensible jumble that results from weaving together the New York and China Times, but it's given interest by the reference, no matter how illogical, to the fact that one newspaper is read in horizontal lines traced from left to right, the other in vertical lines from top to bottom.

In fact, I suspect that much of Anderson's real interest is in the technical characteristics of her work. Replacing the bridge of a violin with a tape recorder playback head and drawing over it, not a conventional bow, but one in which horsehair has been replaced by a length of pre-recorded tape may yet, in performance, prove the



"I have this recurring nightmare. And that is that everyone in the world, except myself, has the problems of babies... I mean they're normal height and everything— five feet, six feet tall—in that respect they are normal. But they have these giant heads, like babies, you know. And these enormous eyes and tiny arms and legs. Real top-heavy. And they can hardly walk, you know? And I'm going down the street and when I see them coming I give them some room— I step aside. Also, they don't read or write so I don't have much to do. Job-wise, it's pretty easy."







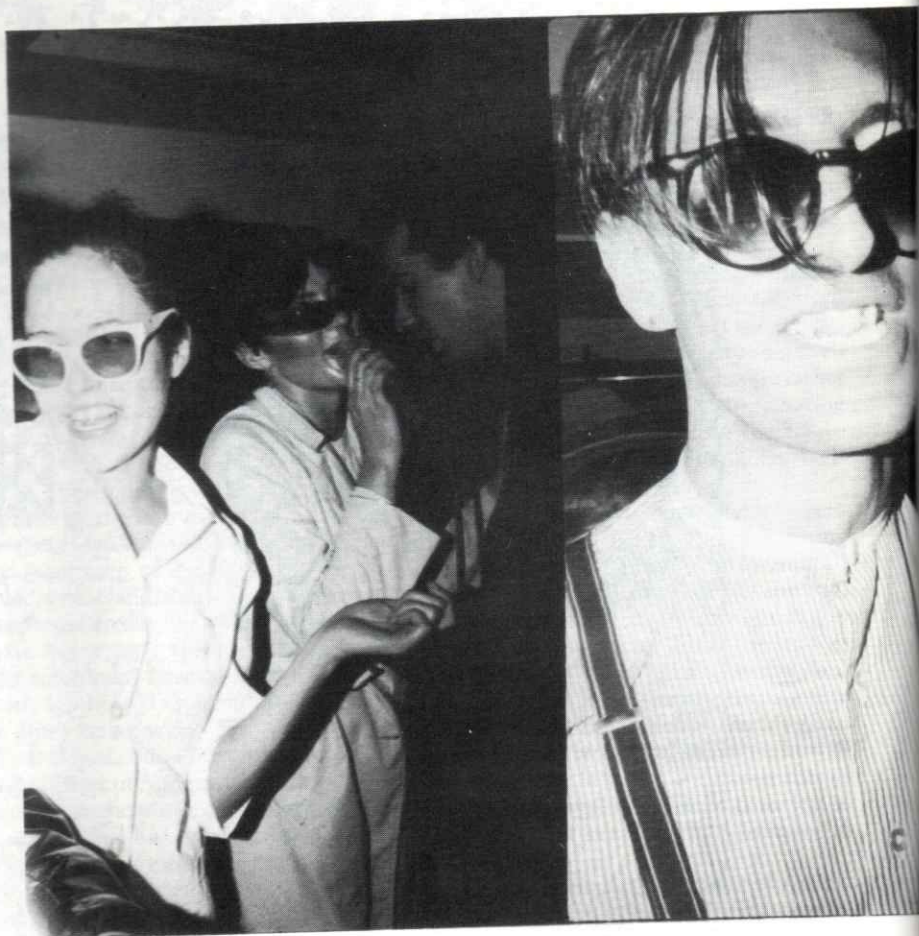
basis of something more, but its invention suggests a primarily technical interest. Similarly, Anderson's much discussed hit record, *O Superman* appealed through technical novelty — certainly this was the reason for its commercial success.

And perhaps this is why Laurie Anderson looks less than impressive in the art gallery. On record and in performance the hardware, apart from being considerably more sophisticated, is under better control and more comfortably integrated into the product. In Artworks, it often looked peripheral and ill considered; and it repeatedly let the works down, in quite a literal sense. On two separate visits to the exhibition, a week apart, both *Map* and *TV* pieces using recorded tape and 3D specs, were labelled 'Out of Order', and in the interim the reported dream pieces, (*Butcher*, *Student* etc.) had had to be changed in actual physical form. Somewhat ironical then, despite Anderson's reputation as an exponent of a highly technological art, it was the simpler pieces, those more straightforward pictures and sculpture, like *New York Times Horizontal*, *China Times Vertical*, or the five pulped newsprint *Workweek* pieces that look the strongest of her Artworks.

Perhaps even more ironic was the fact that, in an exhibition of work supposedly spawned by, responding to, and coping with contemporary society and its constant technological intrusions, the most popular attraction in the ICA's upper gallery didn't seem to be any of Anderson's works, but rather a television on which a videotape of a South Bank Show profile of Anderson was playing.

Robert Ayers

## Review



The Prospect of Whitby did well that Saturday night. During the course of the evening the organisers of 'Witches Fly South' had to turn over three hundred people away from the door, having completely sold out earlier that day and already squeezing seven hundred plus party-goers into the B2 gallery for the all-night multimedia marathon. Richard Strange, Waldemar Januszczak and Janetta Loretta promised video, performance, film poetry, music and more. No consolation for those who missed the boat, sipping their drinks alongside disapproving German tourists in the pub down the road.

This sell-out is important. It shows just how interested people are in events like this one which challenge the established notion of an evening's entertainment at either a traditional rock gig or a formal theatrical or art performance.

Strange, Januszczak and Loretta share a belief in the potency of an event which combines a variety of media in an intimate setting, in which the audience/performer distinction is blurred and in which the audience are encouraged to participate.

'Witches Fly South' echoed the days of Cabaret Futura, in that both activities were concerned with providing an alternative to the traditional big band set-up and the formality of the established performance

art setting. The 'cabaret' idea enables live music to be presented to an audience without the structural dogmatism of the rock gig, and performance art to take place within a context which will expose it to for more people than its usual small, guaranteed gallery audience. It makes both kinds of activity take risks. It also combines under one roof two kinds of activity which have both emerged in many cases, from a dissatisfaction with the traditional methods of training in creative expression of art schools, but which are usually polarised events.

The choice of B2 as a venue is no coincidence in this respect. It has recently played host to a whole range of activities by music people from the rock world and young performance/experimental artists. The original idea for this event was hatched here by Strange and Januszczak at another event, a benefit for ZG magazine.

The location of the gallery made it ideal for an all-night event, and its remote location did credit to the hundreds of people who turned up, providing that people will travel a long way to be entertained.

The event began at pub closing time as people arrived in their droves in an alternating stream of those with tickets and those without. The aim had been to create something between a public gig and a private



# Witches Fly South

Richard Strange and Event Group at B2



party, and it had all the excitement and anticipation of both. No-one, except the performers, it seemed, knew who was coming on when, or exactly what to expect.

Ian Smith, self-styled eccentric, and multi-media performer extraordinaire, started the ball rolling with a loud and spirited recital of his readings to a packed audience, quite a feat since they seemed, at this point, largely more concerned with whose round it was and who had got in and who hadn't.

Silvia Ziranek was only too aware of this when she took the floor. After several vain attempts to persuade the audience to lower the din sufficiently for her lines to be heard, she ploughed on, against the odds, grabbing a microphone when she could. In the context of an event which aimed to break down the barriers between audience and performer Ziranek's brand of performance stood out as more formal than most, and demanded a level of attention and concentration which, at that point in the evening, the audience were just not prepared to give. It would have been perhaps better to have programmed her performance later in the evening, when the excitement had shaken down a bit and the audience were more receptive. However, the familiar Ziranek sarcasm and cryptic wit, heightened by her frustration towards the unrelent-

ing audience, were as enjoyable as ever, even though much of the subtlety of her actions was lost on the crowd.

Ian Pussycat and Liz Finch then announced their intention to call up the spirit of Harry Houdini, who had passed into the Other World on Hallowe'en at the beginning of the century, and whose wife had made it a ritual to call him up every year ever since. Assistants handed out questionnaires to be filled in and returned; partygoers pondered on such issues as inside leg measurement? Favourite dead person? and instructions to pray for Harry.

Liz Finch and Ian Pussycat with assorted seances sat round a table, fingers on glass, invoking Harry loudly and with great fervour, to some great effect as the glass whizzed from one end of the table to the other, not without earthly assistance.

Performances from Hermine and Sonia Knox followed, though it is difficult to be accurate about the exact form of the programme, as no-one, myself included, can remember who followed who in the great melée. Bottle of vodka were in evidence, and the sound of knocked-over empty lager bottles became more frequent. Ian Cunningham of the Flying Lizards and Virginia Astley and various Ravishing Beauties provided the first music of the evening, and were both well received.

Virginia Astley provided what was, for me, one of the two highlights of the evening (the other being the Event Group at 5 a.m.) Her work, strongly influenced by the classical music tradition and fed through an eighties sensibility taking inspiration from such artists as Laurie Anderson, has a melancholic sadness and an eerie sense of English whimsy with an enchanting and almost sinister edge. She, on keyboards, and her fellow musicians had a now captive audience, who, having got over the novelty of a bar after opening hours, listened attentively, and clapped for an encore and got it.

Their use of instruments was an exceptional feature; most of the acts used tapes and drum machines, a typical feature of such events, facilitating quick changeovers and enabling a large number of acts to take place without the headache of moving equipment round the stage. Indeed, there was no stage as such, and no hierarchy of acts; they just followed each other one by one in fairly quick succession with disco in between. The large number of female performers was another reflection of the particular nature of this event.

As the evening wore on, the audience became smaller and more interested in the acts at hand. Richard Strange performed a set of songs with video backdrop and taped music, followed by Rene Eyre, who danced within an extremely restricted space which the audience had created around the action taking place, but nevertheless managed a mesmeric performance.

It's four a.m. The curious, faint-hearted and smattering of celebrities have gone. The faithful, friends, and those who feel they might as well stay until the first tube having got this far remain. And there are treats in store. After a set by the Klaxon Five I suddenly realise that the figures in raincoats and dark glasses who have been wandering amongst the audience all evening staring rudely and unsmilingly into people's faces (including mine), seemingly oblivious to the irritation it was often causing, are clues to a performance by the Event Group which is just about to begin.

One of the aforementioned appears to be administering something unpleasant and unwanted to a girl in a black shiny raincoat sitting on a chair, to a background of the kind of music that usually accompanies the murder scene in a Hitchcock film. She is assisted by a nurse. A sense of unease prevails; it is only the Event Group of course, but their cold, unseeing expressions and their complete disregard for everyone around them is disturbing, as they carry out cardboard cut-out 'spy' actions in the mode of 'From Russia With Love'.

A man in a T-shirt and underpants hurls himself around, swinging a microphone stand above his head and smashing empty bottles against the pillar on which I am leaning, narrowly missing me and several other members of the dazed audience who haven't got the energy to get



# Review

out of the way. They do, in any case, apply a kind of polite acceptance of the act, despite it being a bit close for comfort. It's a performance after all, and they know how far to go. Or do they? He throws a chair across the room. People are being forced to rethink their ideas — are they really safe?

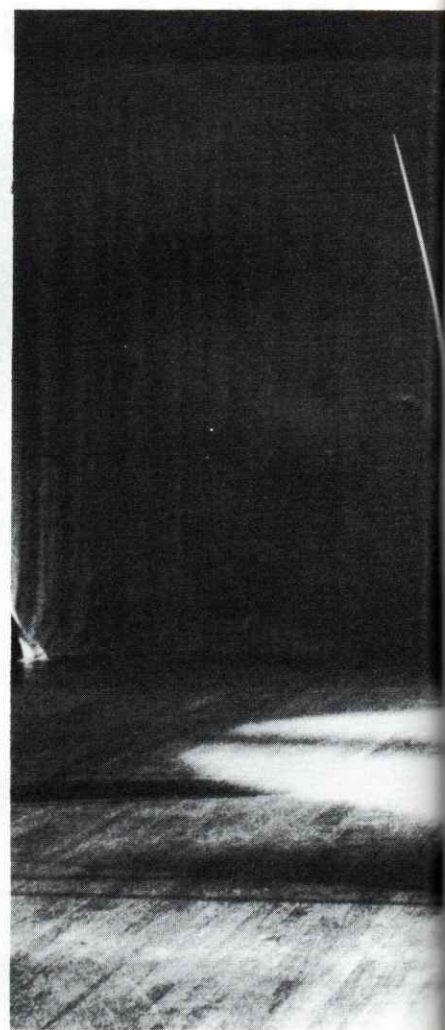
The pitch is heightened. The girl in the raincoat and dark glasses pulls a member of the audience into the middle of the space and pushes him down onto the floor. She repeats this until she has gathered a group of the audience into the centre of the performance space. They remain there, crouching expectantly, being ignored by the rest of the performers, who are busy staring out various members of the audience gathered round. The group obediently huddle together uncomfortably, waiting for something to happen. It doesn't.

The performers continue to provoke the audience, catching someone's attention and then turning away, playing games with us until we are not sure how far we are going to let them go. The nurse does something to the black-shiny-mac-girl in the chair. She screams loudly. The man in the overcoat with the brylcreamed hair picks up a bass guitar and begins to play. A drum machine beats out a rhythm. The girl in the black shiny mackintosh and another sinister-looking woman in the fur coat and hat both grab microphones and begin rapping to the music. One of the group in the middle begins to dance. Tentatively at first, others slowly follow suit, until the entire audience is dancing. There is a strong feeling of relief, of something having been resolved. I am still not sure whether I am watching a performance or not, or where the lines begin and end. The performers are acting normally. There is a sense of barriers having been broken down, of freedom in the fact that you are standing in that same performance space and doing something.

There is that feeling you get after a good party; of having enjoyed yourself to the point of exhaustion, but still not quite ready to leave. That was the end, however, and so we stumble out at 6.30 a.m. onto the street, with a feeling of some triumph at having survived the night, and walk all the way to Brick Lane for a cup of tea.

Was it a success? Any event which attempts to do what 'Witches Fly South' did has to be commended. Strange's concern with redefining structures and setting up something in its own terms creates its own criteria for judgment rather than pre-existing ones. There is a fragmentation of mainstream culture; people are tired of being remote spectators. The Event Group was memorable because of the way in which they involved us and challenged our passivity. This kind of event becomes what *you* are willing to make of it, and that is a rare thing these days.

Chrissie Iles



## Performance Platform

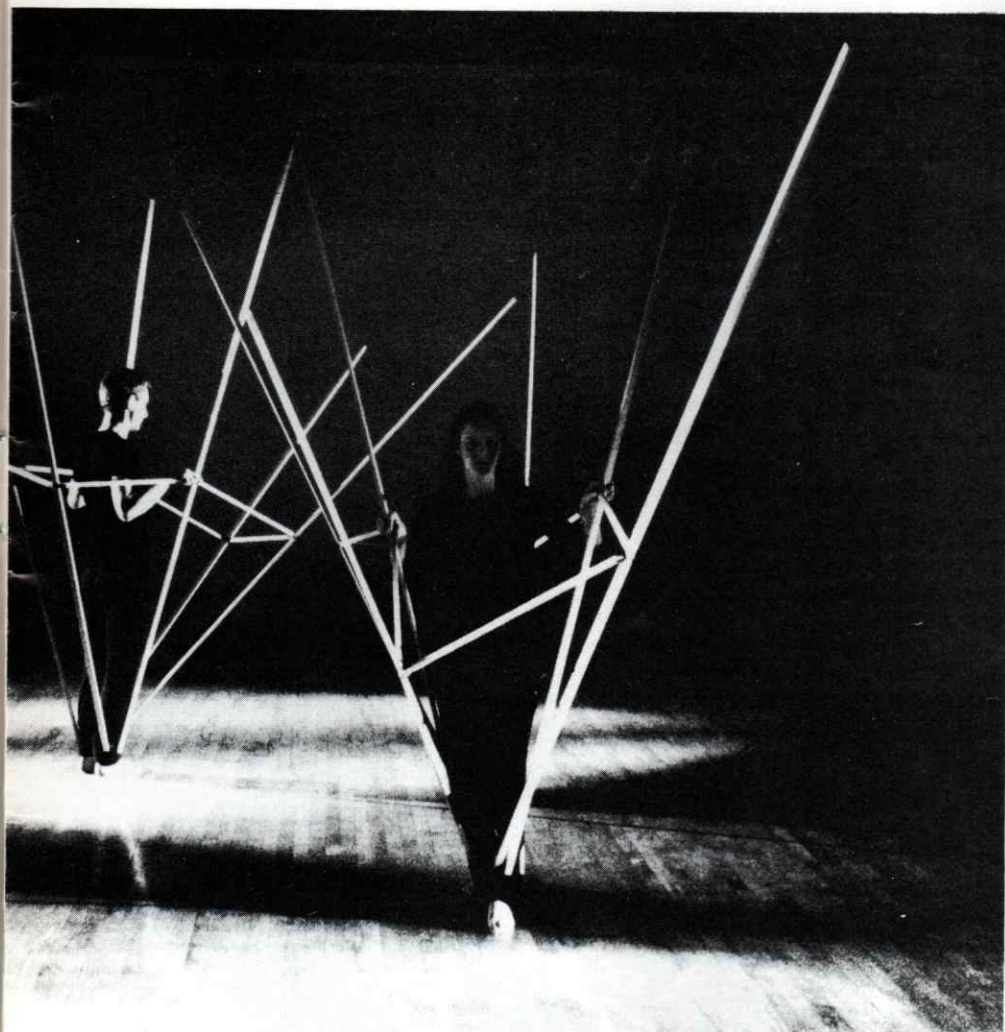
Nottingham is the ideal spot for a trade fair for live art, for that is what the Midland Group Performance Platform has almost become. 'Delegates' staying at the Waverley Commercial Hotel, a 'Pennies From Heaven' style nostalgic epitome of the Midland Salesmans Stopover, with budgies, tinted photos, radiogram, a visitors book stretching back thirty years and the whole affair done out in dark red gloss paint; spend a gruelling day watching 'displays' ranging from endurance pieces to absurdism, smoke bomb epics to food fetishism, body art to ballistics. Spilling out into the street afterwards the performance goes on; Lawrentian Nottingham on a Saturday night out without the flat caps. Yates Wine Lodge, throbbing with this traditional Saturday Nocturnal hedonism; fights breaking out in odd corners, a balcony string trio pumping out manic Tchaikovsky; has its usual brimful of shop-persons and art students supplemented by a shell-shocked Platform audience who have just spent a full day watching people throw spaghetti at one another or riding bicycles endlessly in the dark.

So much for atmospherics. What the

Performance Platform itself does is provide an essential intensive experience for those most interested in the future of live art; especially in this country, where veteran avant-gardists in their forties and fifties are still regarded as radical Young Turks with the absence of the sort of establishment acceptance they would receive in the US or Europe. It roots out the younger and lesser known artists who don't get Arts Council money (not necessarily always the same thing) and gives them space and facilities to present their work. The audience consists of the other artists, representatives of funding bodies, critics, students and academics, and the interested public. Although the organisers may not wish it, it really is self-limiting in that way. It is right that it should be, not because there is an important need for performance to be self-regarding from time to time, so that it can mature and develop a language for itself in the same way as static visual art and theatre. Performance art has for too long been forced into a Peter Pan role by jealous painters and actors.

As if to put the lie to the Trade Fair allusion, the organisers this year chose to





Sue Carpenter

surround the event with a festival of slightly more established work, including Station House Opera, Marty St James and Anne Wilson, Eric Bogosian (US) Forkbeard Fantasy and the Basement Group artists from Newcastle. This had the healthy effect of providing a backdrop and frame of reference to the less familiar as well as enabling the festival artists to see the Platform themselves, and the Platform artists vice versa. There was also a good crowd of locals in for the evening performances.

The most enjoyable of the Platform pieces, though perhaps not with the most depth, was Steven Taylor Woodrow's *Club Boring*. To a great extent a neo-Dada event, and as such a bit dubious in intention, it made up in terms of crispness and humour what it lost in obviousness of source material. The audience entered a space dominated by a table with chairs placed upside down, on it, like a closed cafe, a good static metaphor for 'Club Boring'. The two performers entered, dressed in the traditional black evening dress, and paid homage to the various dadaist icons mounted on the wall. A bust, a can of spag-

hetti, a can opener. A formula is recited, to the objects in different order: 'There is something splendid about a self-sacrificing and disinterested act — Look, you Bastard!' A banana is placed in a sock, a hammer is poised to hit it; the hammer is dropped — 'I feel sick'. The can of spaghetti is opened, and is poured into a polished black shoe. The audience is by now quite absorbed, the combination of food fetish and footwear being somehow horribly fascinating to a British audience, and I feel almost ashamed at the ridiculousness of the dramatic tension — 'Will he put it on or won't he?' He does of course, and squelches away dripping tomato sauce. The marble bust explodes, and Club Boring expires for the intermission. I was less impressed with the second piece — Pasta Ballet, a Morris dance done in the style of Forkbeard Fantasy, the main joke being the ritual and rhythmic casting of spaghetti in each other's faces. A clear case of the source material being outdone by the sauce material.

Club Boring have performed on the country fair circuit this year as well as in galleries and colleges: perhaps this gave

them a certain experience in performing skill and timing that is often studiously avoided on such events.

One of the most studious avoiders of this is Andre Stitt. His 'Akshuns' bear the mark of heavy metal overkill, with smoke bombs, flashing lights, bits of wire and debris pointedly and perhaps rather predictably referring to this Northern Irish background. Frankly, I find his action-man para-military hyperactivity a bit of a pose, and the overdramatic 'Danger UXB' type soundtrack and images that he uses a silly glamorisation of a violent situation, with no actual sense of threat or risk to back it up. Rumour had it that he was stopped from working at the platform last year because of the strong political overtones of his 'Dogs in Heat' publicity. I didn't see that performance, at the Film Co-op in London, but on the evidence of this work (*Terra Incognita*) whoever censored him had nothing to worry about. The fact that he surrounds his movements with the generality of an 'emotional experience' and scatters around a few psycho-sexual and religious metaphors does not remove the fact that his main theme is war. He comes from a country at war, and he ought to know that war is a sordid and messy business; that war is if anything a metaphor for oppression, not an excuse for a lot of silly lights and smoke. At the end of all the running about Stitt stood in the middle of the debris and made the only gesture that seemed to have any resonance or emotional significance. An aerosol 'Frog-horn' allowed to blast continuously was held up against slides of empty city streets at night, traffic lights changing. After all the fuss, we were left with the only metaphor that worked: an empty loneliness. A final, and almost welcome antidote to the theatrical clutter of Stitt's no-mans-land.

The Hanging Committee, in complete contrast to this, performed a piece of almost hygienic body-art, culminating in an outbreak of pure didacticism in the spirit of Conrad Atkinson (incidentally the subject of criticism by Andre Stitt in an interview in this magazine). In *Spiral*, the four artists dragged themselves painfully around a marked out figure of that description before collapsing in the centre. One of them, a woman, remains while the others move away and attach ribbons to her spreadeagled body. They are coloured red, white and blue. The blue ones are attached to labels bearing the names of cruise missile stations and NATO forward bases, Lakenheath, Upper Heyford, Greenham Common etc. The white ones go to nuclear power stations — Faslane, Dounreay etc.; the red ones to the 1981 riot areas, Brixton, Toxteth, St Pauls etc. This is all done with some care and quiet control, and I for one am moved by the spectacle of the encumbered performer, tied down gulliver-like by the interconnected tensions of the nuclear nation-state. I don't know why



such simple, almost banal political statements like this can have such an effect; the thinking goes against the grain in that Performance usually thrives best in the realms of the less obvious. But the bald, visual statement worked in this context.

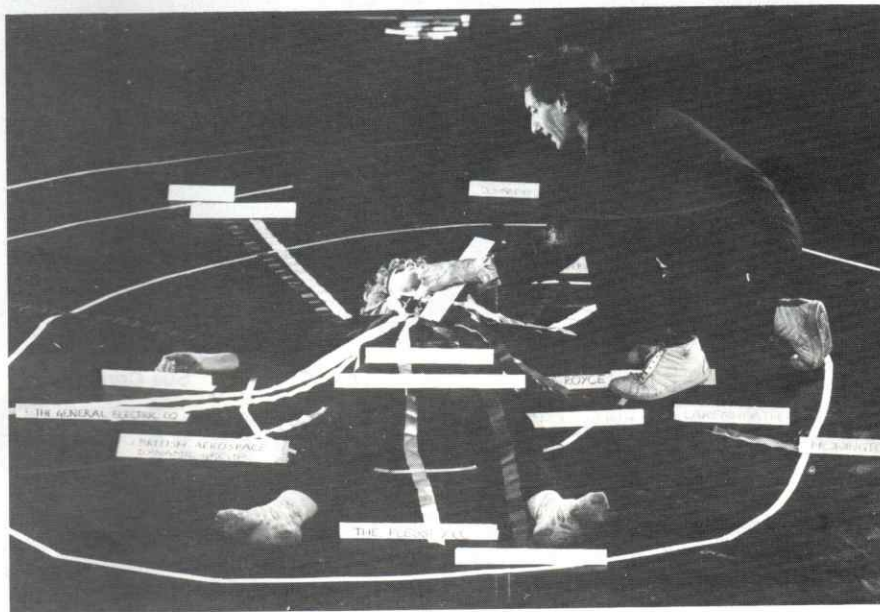
**The Great American Breakfast** started promisingly with Kevin Crum, the artist preparing a table with the aforesaid repast, switching on a tape recorder, and disappearing into the upper reaches of the gallery. In relating to the audience he had a droll, relaxed style that prepared us for this food/music/poetry piece. We hear sounds of an alarm clock, aural symbols of waking, steam trains etc, but unfortunately Crum doesn't appear as one might have expected, in pyjamas and dressing gown, at the appropriate moment. Instead we hear him at various early morning activities, like guitar practice, and he in fact drifts down in a fairly laid back and untimed way with some eggs that he's cooked. This would be OK, except that the performance gets more and more loose and meaningless, and dominated by a soundtrack that doesn't seem to be getting anywhere. He invites members of the audience to join him for breakfast, which some do, but he is clearly not satisfied with this participation, and he commences to throw food around, causing the audience to duck. I don't think this is very funny, not because I mind contact with the food but because I'm suddenly, perhaps unaccountably annoyed by the waste of good food by an artist. Unaccountable, because I didn't feel this about the spaghetti in the shoe. It, and his attitude, makes the whole action seem trite and meaningless, and the relationship with the audience is broken. We leave the table overlaid with a sense of menace and aggression. Maybe this is intended. Maybe we also don't want to hear a lot more about American culture at the moment, if that was what this was about.

No menace thrived during Karen Rann's performance. A livewire eccentric in the English mould, a natural anarchism shone through in her gentle collage of Radio 4 segments. 'I've had my leg pulled a little about peat' (Gardeners Question Time) being typical of the type of subliminal fragment drifting around the head of the at-home Ms. Rann. Of this piece, Instruction, she says 'Ideas for my work originate from everything around me, particularly people, places, books and films. I think of my work as an active response to these phenomena rather than an analytical study.'

She managed to genuinely astonish those present with her second performance, when she simply showed a film of a dancer making various movements against a black background. When the film was over, instead of switching off the projector and switching on the lights, she walked over to the screen and lifted it up, to show a collection of light-sensitive marking where the dancer had been; thereby creating an original piece of two dimensional art. Her execution of this simple but effective task outweighed any implied gimmick.



**The Hanging Committee**



Nicholas Stewart, from Northern Ireland performed one of the few endurance pieces: 'Act of Consummation'. I should have preferred to see this as an installation lasting over a longer period in the gallery, as I believe he has done before with this work. Carrying a yoke across his shoulders, two buckets of water balanced either side symbolized the relationship between England and Ireland as he walked around a circle of mud and ashes. From time to time he paused at a hanging window, while distant strains of Irish and military music filtered through. I felt awkward being in an 'audience' to such an event, and felt almost trapped by the artists concentration and possible pain. It is necessary to move around and see from a different angle, to come and go. A reluctant voyeur can only feel guilt or annoyance.

To conclude, I will summarise the performances that left me feeling less strongly one way or another.

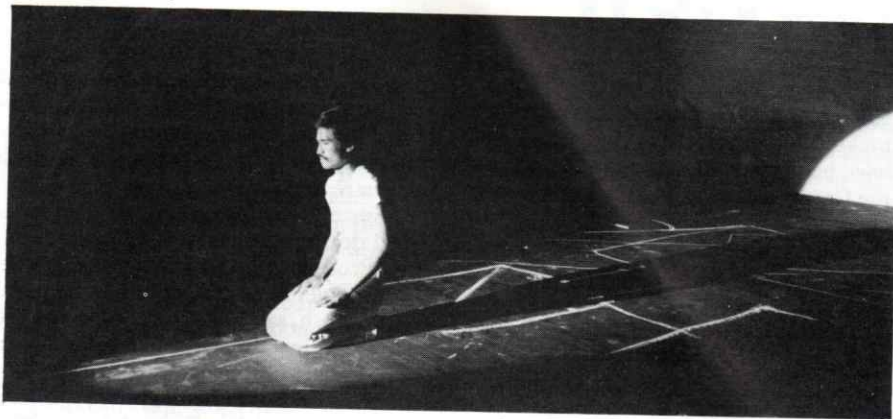
Mineo Aayamaguchi's *A Space* was refreshingly physical, vigorous and decisive, involving as it did pure 'zen' actions with respect to the immediate environment. But isn't that a bit too predictable for a Japanese artist?

Frank De Caires *Bicycle Performance/Slide Show* was a flop. Much as I like the idea of using bicycles, to cycle them round and round in an enclosed space has been done before, better, and I don't see any particular deep significance in ringing a bicycle bell. The one nice touch was the autumn leaves sprinkled for the wheels to crush.

Janet Davies — *The Nature of the Target Organ produces Fragments such as these*. I've seen this twice now, once before at Air Gallery, and I still don't get it. The title sounds interesting, the subject's interesting (genetics), Davies' background (Theatre of Mistakes) is interesting, even the set-up and mode of dress is interesting. Why then



Mineo Aayamaguchi



is it so boring and why did half the audience walk out? Still, Janet Davies' insistent monotone still echoed through my brain days later, so was there some subtle form of verbal conditioning in the apparently meaningless text? Time will tell.

Sue Carpenter built excellent wearing structures, made of wood, and based on Samauri armour for her *Structure—Movement—Sound* and provided really the most visually stimulating presentation. But why did it have to be so choreographed? Application of dance principles to such ideas, to me lends an unnecessary aridity which could have been avoided by simply seeing them worn, in a random way. Still, the 'dervish' movements, with all the slats clack-clacking to a halt on change of direction, was really worth experiencing.

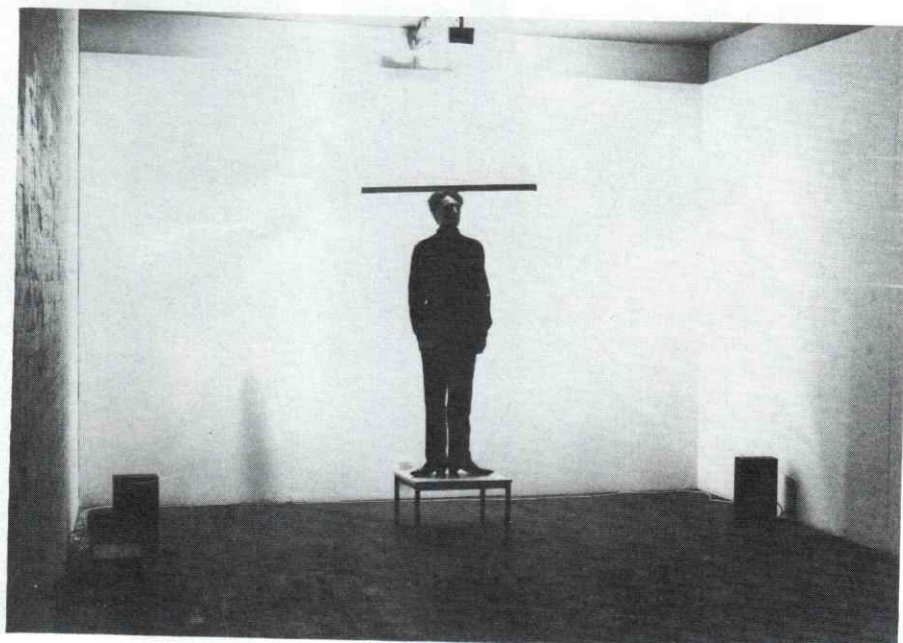
Finally, back to the Great British Eccentric Department for Noel Perkins' *Flow Motion*. This, to everyone's initial disbelief, was a water-powered movie projector! Buckets of water were poured into the top of a large wooden structure which then ran the mechanism that turned the film and also cooled the light bulb. The film, shot by the same principle, almost seemed to blend in with the process, as if it had been rescued from some waterlogged

archive.

It can be seen that the selection this year was wide and ambitious, and served its purpose admirably in bringing to light a representative selection of good, bad and indifferent work. This is much better than playing safe with selections, in the hope that consistent quality can be achieved. In Live Art it can't. It would be Dead Art otherwise.

However, one criticism has to be made, of a mistake that has been repeated, and should not be again. There is **no point** in wheeling out a Performance 'Star' (last year Jeff Nuttall, this year Roland Miller) to lead a discussion if he or she cannot see all the Platform work. Roland Miller had some interesting points to make, but they were basically irrelevant to the weekend's experience, people were tired, and the discussion was a dead duck. As it was, there was not much time left till the last festival event, Forkbeard Fantasy, and it was satisfying to see some of the more rarefied visual performance 'delegates' being given the full treatment by more experienced saboteurs of the space between theatrical artifice and absurdist art.

**Rob La Frenais.**





# Review

Derry is no more than one would expect. Grey, bleak, tense — the clichés trip off the tongue effortlessly. The barricades may have been taken down on the Bogside and the Creggan and the British Army may go about its 'peace keeping' with a lower profile, but no one talks about the city being a more 'relaxed' place these days. Merely a bit quieter.

That Culture should find a foothold — and flourish — in Derry seems almost like a bad joke. Crippled by war and high unemployment Derry is not the place one would expect to find a state subsidized gallery, particularly when there have been no precedents of any kind for such a venture. The success of the Orchard Gallery is therefore something of a surprise — if that's the right word. Up until 1978 Derry had virtually no cultural or recreational amenities. In 1973 the SDLP council proposed that if Derry was to continue to call itself a city it should offer its residents the amenities of a city. In 1978 after years of

haggling about where the amenities should be sited (down-town Derry was finally decided upon as 'neutral' territory) the Orchard Gallery was finally opened, along with a theatre and a sports centre.

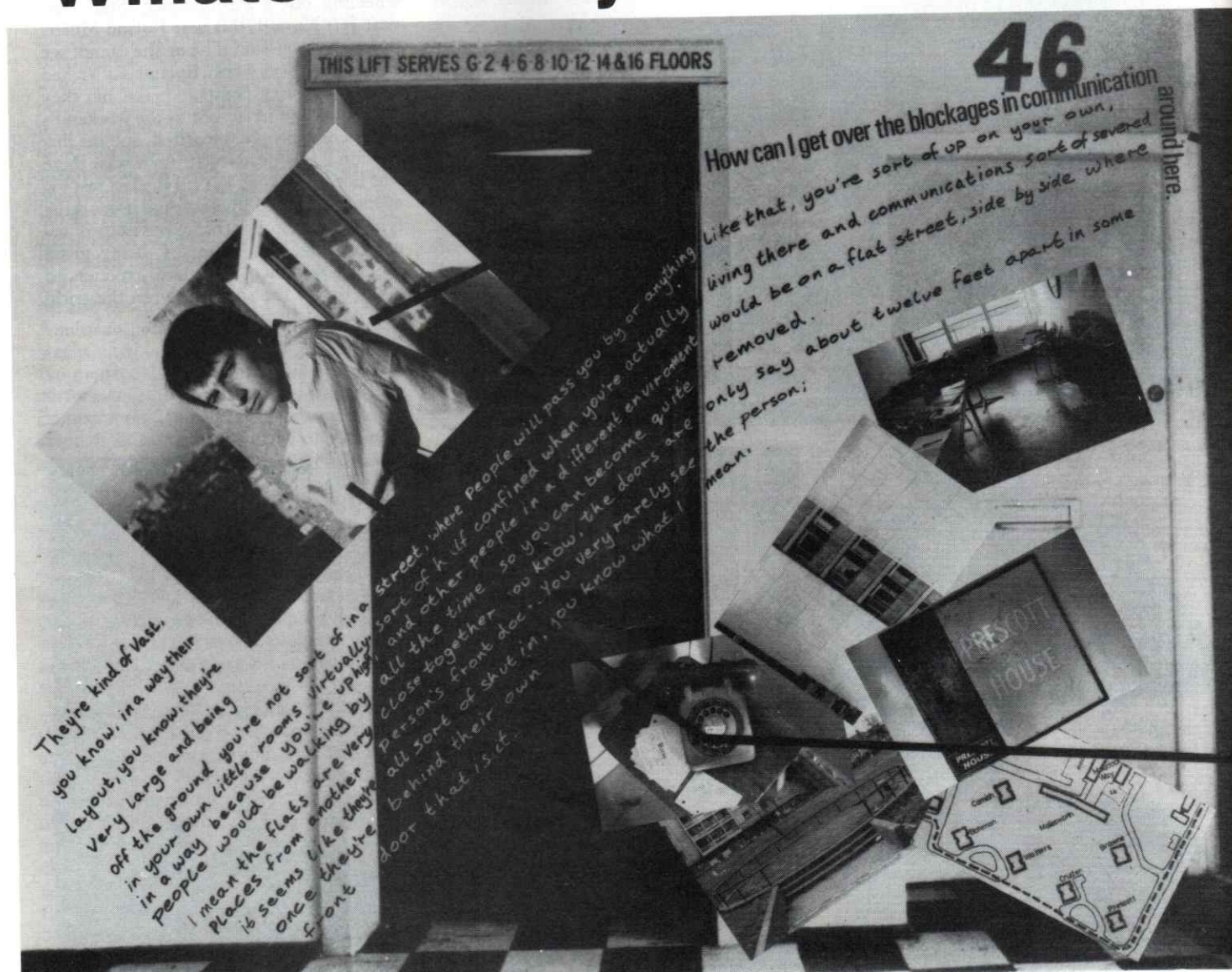
Since then the gallery has built up a good deal of support within the community, Protestant and Catholic. As Declan McConagle, the director of the gallery and a Derryman, says: 'it's as if people trust the space'. Remarkably, this trust has been built upon a very adventurous exhibitions programme. Stuart Brisley, Gerard Hemsworth, Nigel Rolfe, Richard Long, John Murphy and recently Stephen Willats, have all had one man shows. Coupled with this 'experimental' work has been a variety of conventional exhibitions (local amateur work, holography) and miscellaneous events such as rock and jazz gigs (The Undertones, Derry's most famous sons, have played in the gallery).

The gallery 'both demands from, and gives to, the audience', says McConagle.

Although he doesn't see himself involved in what he calls 'social missionary work' he wants the gallery to take an active role. His decision to show Willats was taken in the hope that the work would 'make connections'.

Willats in Derry? It is impossible for the work not to 'make connections'. Willats work has always sought, where possible, an empathetic context for his 'consciousness-raising'. Willats though was not involved in a project in Derry itself (something that had been mooted but then dropped); the show consisted of work from recent projects in London: the Charville Lane Estate project **Two Worlds Apart**, **Pat Purdy and the Glue Sniffers** (based on the activities of a group of kids on a piece of wasteland 'The Lurky Place' adjacent to the Avondale Estate, Hayes, West London) and **The Kids Are in the Streets** (based on the life of a young guy in a tower block on the Branden Estate in South London).

## Willats in Derry





Description or formal analysis of Willats work is otiose. Willats is an information gatherer. A biographer. His interest in aesthetics is cursory, antipathetic even. The photographic panels and now collages (arriviste New Wave) are purely tokens. What remains primary is the context, the knowledge that others (white working class adults and kids) have participated in, and determined the outcome of, the work. It is far more profitable to talk about Willats' shows as **arguments**. As arguments for what art can achieve in functional terms. Willats' close involvement with his subjects is not based upon example ('look what people can do with a bit of encouragement') but on co-operation, on a defence to the needs of others. What is important is this self-expression (in those whose lives are nominally dismissed as 'non-creative') is seen to have taken place, to have authority.

Because Willats chooses not to work within a specific political discourse but at the same time espousing a certain egalitarianism (Willats first concern is trust; the participants are not distanced as a

Because Willats chooses not to work within a specific political discourse but at the same time espousing a certain egalitarianism (Willats first concern is trust; the participants are not distance as a 'problem') he is forced to organize his materials along fairly simple symbolic lines. Underneath all the cybernetics and information theory Willats is a Romantic at heart. Willats focus on 'areas outside of planned urban life' (such as 'The Lurky Place') — their occupation and use — are counter-cultural metaphors, sites of 'counter-consciousness'. Planned urban living is bad, areas free of public control are good. Willats may not be so naive to suggest that all planned urban living is bad, but he needs to emphasize its worst aspects in order to stress the limits put on self-expression in such circumstances. Sometimes this takes on a comical aspect. Underneath a photograph of a bush in a pot on a housing estate in the catalogue to the show Willats writes: 'The separation and control of nature is emphasised in the New Reality by isolating and encoding it within concrete'. One has visions of council workers being given stern directives to encode things in concrete.

If Willats is not interested in aesthetics and the works are purely tokens, if the efficacy of the work lies in the collaboration with others, what are we left with? I think one remains faithful to the work because it has no pretensions. It recuperates working class experience in such a way as to say what is at stake here is not: 'I am an artist making work about the working class, I am political, I am conscientious', but that working class experience can find expression directly through art, albeit in this instance mediated on the way by the professional artist.

**John Roberts**

change the shape of broadcasting. And, indeed, their findings were unexpected. In essence, the Annan report advocated an 'opening-up' of the medium, with a fourth channel free from the constraints of BBC and IBA, operated by the Open Broadcasting Authority, and taking in work from independents, individuals, pressure groups — in fact any group who realised the potential of television and had the resources to make programmes. Admittedly, the plan was for something more structured than a non-stop *Open Door*, but on the other hand the scope of their vision was reflected in some of their lesser-known findings, such as their advocacy of television operating on a *village* level, with people recording their own views and opinions to show to the people living around them. It was a vision of a democratic broadcasting channel — and one that hinted that they had done some careful listening to the media campaigners.

Whether such high-minded ideals could have won an audience is now a matter of speculation. It wasn't the mockery of the TV moguls, who laughed at the notion that anyone other than themselves could make television, that knocked the plan on the head. When it came to the nitty-gritty, even the BBC supported the idea of an Open Broadcasting Authority — if for no better reason than to deprive the IBA of ITV 2. That the IBA did get a second channel was due to the advent of a Conservative government aiming to drastically reduce public expenditure, and the IBA didn't want a penny of public money to run the new channel.

But the expectations fuelled by Annan couldn't disappear quite so easily. Certainly, the operation of Channel 4 is dependent on finance, and their method of expressing it is all you would expect of an American Broadcast network: 'we need ten per cent of the audience to hold the advertisers'. And, yes, their approach to scheduling is hardly a brave new world, rather a gentle freshener. But the commitment to serve minority interests, somehow, wouldn't evaporate quite so easily. Accordingly, the IBA wheeled in one of the more acceptable faces of broadcasting, in the form of Jeremy Isaacs, for the top job. Of course, the end-product is a watered-down compromise. But is it a good compromise, or a bad one? For the pleasure of mum being able to see you on the box, is it worth it? What's been lost in this chequered gestation period?

There's no doubt that the mixture of the slightly unusual alongside the usual media-fare will have some audience. The question is, that with their commitment to maintaining their audience, how is Channel 4 going to dress-up and process the unusual so that it seems perfectly normal? And what kind of effect will that have on those who were trying to achieve the unusual? Compromises have the nasty habit of spreading very quickly — is this a

trap that can be avoided?

There is little chance that the coffee-table luxury of Charlotte Street is going to treat its minorities any different to the other channels. No part of its process of formation has involved public participation, and as it has no real structure through which people can say what they want to each other, it is abundantly clear that Channel 4 will decide what people want to say to each other. However well intentioned those decisions are, however correct some of their decisions might be, it is clearly a sell-out on Annan's vision.

Wholesale criticism of the Channel, though, is inappropriate. It does remain the best opportunity for showing a whole new area of work, and that is to be welcomed. Indeed, when you consider the extent of the compromises that *could* have been made, you feel duty bound to applaud what has been achieved. What both users and viewers should be doing is not to assume that the existence of Channel 4 precludes the development of other forms of broadcasting. The greatest onus is on those whose work will be shown.

Channel 4 has never released effective power from the hands of broadcasters. The consequence must inevitably be programmes *about* rather than programmes *by* non-broadcasters. This has as much significance for the artists appearing as for the other groups. They are only being engaged in half the process. How much more could they do if they had the ability to grapple with the medium of television rather than being somewhat passive subjects whose work is covered, packaged and presented by others? Would artists and performers welcome the opportunity to develop the language of television, or are they happy to let their work be seen in a traditional framework?

The problems become intensified for those who want to use their air-time to create a more specifically political dialogue with an audience. The benefits of a national audience have to be weighed against the enormous generalisation of the audience. Whilst Channel 4 would be delighted if they had a general audience for minority interest programmes, I suspect that they are shrewd enough not to expect it. The problem is therefore created that they need as much of the minority as possible to be watching programmes made with them in mind. It is hardly surprising that they refer to groups such as youth, the black community, and women in the typically stereotyped way that the media always do. They have failed to take the Mass out of Mass Media, and consequently their view of the audience as numerical blocks, rather than the much smaller interest groups who really make society tick, is bound to replace one form of editorial balance with another.

As if in answer to these points, hope has come from another unexpected source. At its best, Lord Hunt's Report on Cable TV



# Short Reviews

resembles an episode of *Yes Minister*, with a wily civil servant slipping a quick one under the noses of his masters. Admittedly there is little actually stated in the Hunt Report which sounds radical, but a quick session with a pocket calculator reveals that the whole scheme is simply not commercially viable. The potential speculators were quick to realise that the small catchment areas envisaged by Hunt could not produce a financial return. The revenue would only permit the cheapest of cheap television being put down the cable — and people would not subscribe to watch that. So where is the hope?

It is because the scheme is not commercially viable that it is so promising. The only people who could make use of it are those who are subsidised from outside, and that could mean the community media activists. For them the restricted catchment area is a positive point: it is a form of decentralised broadcasting which escapes the massive generalisations of operating on a national scale. Hunt's advocacy of a minimum of control could mean that anything, provided that it didn't break the law, could be shown. And as there isn't going to be enough money around for large studio complexes, the chances of people getting their hands on the gear, and getting to grips with the medium are improved.

I can only cautiously envisage this prospect, aware that the report is running the gauntlet of the government, with the consequent onslaught of pressure from business interests. But for those who can see the potential of creating work for a genuinely new audience the future is there to be fought for. There have never been so many back-doors into the ivory-castle of broadcasting, and the future shape of television is as much dependent on where *we* put our energy as much as anyone else.

Pete Shelton

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## Ellen Fisher ICA

Ellen Fisher's performance 'Figurines' was given on two consecutive nights at the ICA as part of their New York season. In effect, the performance could have been included in any other season as the piece curiously transcended any sense of particularity of New York urban culture or even the generalized American concerns that mark the work of Split Britches, Eric Bogosian and Laurie Anderson who are also contributing performances to ICA: New York.

Far from looking twentieth century or urban, 'Figurines' has a timeless and universal quality about it that is quite disarming. The preoccupations or themes are centred around the most basic human urges and patterns as Fisher enacts a life-cycle of impulses ranging from childhood wilfulness to eroticism, aggression, fear, anger, desperation and finally mute reconciliation in her forty minute performance. The result is a dramatic and draining piece of theatre.



Ellen Fisher

The props being very minimal (a table, 2 lamps, a plastic male figurine and two tiny dolls), the key to the success of the performance is in Fisher's range of movement. Her act is a blend of dance, mime, acrobatics and a type of puppetry which demonstrate the extraordinary versatility and tight control of her body. From merely letting her fingers dance across the table, she is next able to throw herself in convulsive fits across the floor. As much as her time spent with Meredith Monk in the House (1975 - 1981), her year in Sri Lanka with Indian dancers learning Tai-chi and gymnastic skills must have contributed considerably to her training and helped give her movements the crispness and

poise they show. These effects are all added to by the range of physical appearances she is able to command. At first we see a nineteenth century missionary in heavy dress and low brimmed straw hat. The same dress (minus the hat) then evokes a small girl coyly pulling down her skirts to cover her knees and play with her dolls. Next the dress itself is unbuttoned and from the restrictions of the heavy cloth, emerges a minx-like woman clothed in black only to be finally reclothed to end the piece in quiet reflection. For each persona, a new mood is created calling for a different response each time from the spectator.

The only problem with such a varied performance is that it lacks unity. Despite the thematic title, it comes across as a sequence of individual pieces linked together like a series of exercises. The memorableness of it as a performance comes from the implicit threat in the sudden changes of tone. Constantly caught off-guard, there is no certainty in what to expect, and consequently the spectator feels disarmed by the constant reversals. If 'Figurines' has no ostensible connections

with the more obvious urban subject matter of Laurie Anderson for example, it at least links up with the nervous energy and sense of unrest that is evident in New York culture specifically and with urban feeling generally. It makes an interesting and thought-provoking addition to the New York season at the ICA.

Anna Moszyska

## Arnaud-Labelle Rojoux Midland Group

**Long Distances** was a powerful performance and also strong on a purely visual, pictorial level. Entering the space we



observed the artist completing his preparations, the almost ritual sprinkling of red and yellow powder paint along the floor, at two places forming the words 'Duchamp' and 'Matisse'. (This seemed to me a far better use for powder paint than trying to paint with it; at school it was something I never found very satisfactory, it would never do what I wanted it to).

Rojoux, seated in a chair, propels himself backwards around and through the (surprised) audience, shouting more and more hoarsely to 'Mammy!' Later he rolls in Matisse and Duchamp, obliterating them, and then runs back and forth, wooden boards attached to his shoes, throwing a fine cloud of red and yellow powder that sticks in the throat and hazes the air. To one side are projected the names of far-away places but Rojoux never gets there. With the verging-hysterical desperation of the child who calls and calls (wanting — Mammy? Daddy? nothing?) he runs over and over again along the same piece of floor, the wood striking painfully. The voyage finally exhausts him.

It was impressive to see an artist so immersed in what he was doing that one forgot all about 'make-believe' and 'performing' and 'presentation': this was real and taking place now. All the disturbance and noise was directly experienced by those present, not just watched and walked away from. This is important. This is good (performance) art.

Ann Cullis

## Optik Cockpit

Optik have been in existence for over a year now and have already toured two shows, *One Spectacle* (1981) and *Second Spectacle* (1982). Short-sighted, which they brought to the Cockpit in October was the first production I had seen, and I certainly felt as though I'd been missing out on something, they're the sort of company you feel you'd like to know from the start.

The three performers, Heather Ackroyd, Paul Bown and Adrian Rawlins all trained together at Crewe and Alsager College, where an integrated approach to visual arts and drama led them into a performance style which emphasises both the involvement of creative design and live music. Cornelia Parker's wrought-iron sets and Clive Bell's music certainly exemplify this attitude. An eclectic assortment of instruments and Marjie Underwood's electric singing combine to create a whole other dimension to the spectacle, and Clive whose work also involves him in the London Musician's Collective can never be accused of going for the obvious or the merely commentary, the musician as performer in his/her own right means that the music doesn't simply become a theatrical backing track.

Short sighted takes as its inspiration Jean Luc Godard's 'Breathless' and 'The Barber of Seville', marrying them together in an extraordinarily seamless performance piece, creating a timeless continuum in

which the three individuals, Count/Lindor, Figaro and Rosina constantly meet and depart in locations from Renaissance Spain to a colonial outpost in South America.

The piece opens determinedly in the present, Heather Ackroyd in black plastic mac frenziedly attempts to break out of the mould, dancing a kind of T'ai Chi ballet as though her life depends on it. A boy in a red jersey joins her and is gone. Pan pipes play and a woman sings

'When lemons taste like honey dew/  
I'll stop loving you'

Before there's even time to register, time shifts, and a becloaked figure with a lamp is serenading an unseen love. In the distance the woman sings  
'Don't play a sentimental melody,  
They leave me breathless,  
They leave me breathless'

Optik



Barry Edwards

The moments build layer on layer, each meeting oddly out of joint, as though two jigsaws had been shattered, then lovingly reassembled to form one. The count is advised by Figaro to disguise himself as a soldier in order to gain admittance to his loved one, he reappears as a soldier, but in modern dress. Rosina, as she flutters and flirts with the Barber, cannot see him with his sandwiches and thermos.

The action shifts, the elusive Rosina is found again on the other side of the world, a white-suited traveller finds her in some dusty shanty town where she dances a wild, shrieking display, a cigar clamped firmly between her teeth. A long slim flute is played, drums sound and, as she whirls it seems the time is suspended. Optik excel at such moments, where the visual and aural experiences meld and boundaries dissolve.

There are images of extreme beauty and of sheer lunacy and sometimes they are the same. It seemed unfortunate that sometimes the need to move the story along got in the way. I felt we could have dispensed with some of the exposition in the interests of a clearer vision of their shifting relationships. It seemed that once the original debt to Godard and Beaumarchais had been

acknowledged it was necessary to stay closer to them than perhaps the performers needed. From this showing they certainly have the ability to leap the chasm once the initial spark has been charged.

Stella Hall

## Sitting Ducks Kings Head

A deep red light glows on the piano, a white venetian blind is hauled up to reveal a pile of shapeless striped boulders, the pianist, Jacky Taylor, takes her place and sings a plaintive ballad 'I'll love you tonight/if your lipgloss stays bright'. Unnoticed, the heap has undergone amoebic fission and there are two boulders, then four, and suddenly these amorphous lumps have taken on a life of their own. A bright pink latex bag struggles out of its grey casement like a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis and starts to sing the lead of 'To know you is to love you' while the asexual backing group choruses along, lifting heads, or is it bums, in time to the music.

From here on we are treated to variations on the bag theme; a blue furry box conducts a love-affair with a multi-coloured tube, a striped yellow shape and two grey ones sing a song about Depression with a doo-wop backing, a turquoise bag with a tiny head at each end sings a song between an old man and a young girl, the images tumble over each other as more and more appear. We can hardly believe there are only four performers.

The seemingly smooth transition from song to song is turned on its head as two performers in the same bag come on and arrange themselves into an armchair. And wait. After a minute or so a furiously whispered conversation begins. They've cut this number. Which way do they get off? Each has another bag waiting in the opposite direction. The armchair collapses, looking more like an elastic-sided tumble-drier as the two inmates fight their way out.

On the whole the songs are fairly gentle send-ups, including a wild tap routine in red and black bags with pointed hoods strongly reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan; the pianist turns drummer for this number and the Klansters do a hand-jive while singing 'Jealousy does a tapdance on my mind'. By this stage the bags have become more distinctly humanoid and for the next number, a lullaby in sleeping bags, we actually see bare arms! I'm not surprised then to see the four women clamber out and reveal themselves in glitter skirts and brightly-coloured necklaces for what seemed to be the final chorus. I am somewhat perturbed though at the re-emergence of one singer to do a pseudo-Elvis hip-grinding male impersonation 'I'm rough I'm tough/I'll give you enough' utterly out of kilter with the rest of the show. Although she expertly reveals the kind of macho sexuality such singers exude



and the oppressive effect such gyrations can have on those at whom it is directed, it's too late, in a way, to be making this statement. Its impact is negated by the earlier softness; we've been eating marshmallows and we don't want anything else; we wave the bag away without tasting.

The images we take away are fun and colourful, but I'm wondering if next time *Sitting Ducks* will add a little cyanide to the confectionery.

**Stella Hall**

## Attila the Stockbroker New Variety

Attila The Stockbroker delivered a strong and amusing reading as part of the New Variety Cabaret in Brixton at The Old White Horse Inn. Attila has been described as a skinhead poet, a label which has undoubtedly proved useful in the promotion of his work. Poetry, never an instant public draw (the education system, publishers and the mass media have seen to that) began to develop an uneasy relationship with the music world in the 50's. These experiments, largely with Jazz proved unsuccessful in terms of finished products. What it did do was begin a long and hard battle to involve poetry in a live context — to take the word out of the library/drawing room and present it to a public hungry for social, cultural change. In England Mike Horowitz presented his Live New Departure events presenting poetry, jazz and eccentricities throughout the country, giving the public an opportunity to hear some of the most innovative poetry being written at the time and also introducing the American Beat poets to England. Similarly the emergence of The Liverpool Poets, Grimms and Scaffold made poetry instantly available to the public through the blending of rock, folk and poetry in a manner that was far from a dull secretive activity but was 'fun' and spoke about the concerns of the time in the language of the time.

During the past five years the general climate for live Art and poetry has improved enormously. This is partly to do with music press coverage of the area, the publication of various new periodicals and most of all to the persistence and innovation of many artists who have worked venues as varied as pubs, clubs, colleges as well as theatres and galleries for the past decade. We have also seen two poets merge their work very successfully with music: John Cooper Clark and Lynton Kwesi Johnston. Attila therefore enters a world somewhat more prepared for his work than that of his predecessors. Of the two above mentioned poets Cooper Clark could be seen as being an influence upon his work. Attila The Stockbroker delivers his poems in a steady rhythm at 100 MPH, castigating and sneering at his targets: the bourgeois, the trendy and those permanent residents

in the upper class echelons of power: Judges. His politics are undeniable left and his sentiments are most certainly correct, if not also a little naive. His image on stage is that of an angry indignant victim who enacts verbal revenge over his enemies. This he does through a series of fantasies; the most amusing being his 'The Russians are coming', where the sacred haunts of the bourgeois — The Henley Regatta and The Centre Court at Wimbledon are mercilessly desecrated.

These attacks are described in a straight forward manner and despite the amusing nature of these descriptive story telling passages I found him most funny and innovative when his work developed a surreal nature. The danger with Attila's work is that he could almost be seen as nihilistic and unthinking as those he attacks. In 'Contributory Negligence' he exacts horrible revenge upon a judge, who in a similarly arbitrary manner had brushed aside a rape charge on the grounds that girls are asking for it if they go out hitch hiking. The audience is asked to take pleasure in his revenge. Well, there is no doubt that the Judge deserved what was coming to him but is it enough just to offer up revenge as poetry? Attila The Stockbroker wins his audience in the end by the manner of his delivery and not so much through the hard text itself. The self-deprecatory nature of his delivery gathered from both himself and his friends that is hoping to have a break from what is quite a punishing schedule of live performances so that new work can be written. Until then there is an E.P. of his work released through Cherry Red Records featuring songs accompanied by flute, accordion, mandolin and violin, as well as poems.

**Roger Ely**

## Eric Bogosian Midland Group/ICA

Advance publicity had preceded Eric Bogosian leaving the impression of a sort of wunderkind, a Performance superbrat. It had not however prepared me for the fact that Bogosian spends considerable time wandering mapless in the minefield of sexual politics. More specifically male, sexist attitudes. And, as a man, presented entirely subjectively.

I entered his performance at the Midland group about two minutes into the show, which put me in the position of actually being taken in by some of the more offensive banter, for a short while, not having heard the introduction of some Vegas impressario that preceded it. It was enough to tip the balance towards being convinced he was a real one, even though another part of me knew he was a parody. The audience, at first embarrassed, then actually laughing at some of the jokes about 'Women's Liberation' ('I was walking past the Womens Liberation building when I saw a sign which said





"Free Women" — gives some idea of the ghastly tenor of the dialogue) made the situation even more ambiguous. Some of Bogosian's later parodies, which include a street corner shouter after women, who ends up abusing them, then jacking off, takes us into the dangerous and murky realms of negative self-expression as art, which almost amount to a kind of public therapy.

Essentially, I had reason to suspect Bogosian's motives in this sort of presentation, and I put to him after the show the point that parodies rely on a form of theatrical energy that by nature requires the audience to collude with the subject. Bearing in mind the seriousness of the subject matter, shouldn't he have been a bit more in control of the situation? It was up to the audience how they took it, he replied. If they laughed in the wrong places, that was their problem. Shouldn't an element of alienation have been introduced? No, these images of men are there, deep down in him, and he wasn't about to censor them. I warned him that although his intentions were maybe pure, there would be those who misinterpret and be outraged by him. Sure, he said, he'd been attacked by women during performances in the US, but he'd then tried to explain what he was doing to them.

I went to see him a second time at the ICA in London, and the fact that I was increasingly impressed by him; (and that the apparent lack of control of audience response had been somewhat mastered, despite his denial of a need for this;) left me feeling more and more ambiguous about him. He was so flawless that the majority now excused any lack of comment. His radio sequence now sparkled, especially the adverts for ridiculous consumer products. Interestingly, his extended joke about record compilations of dead Superstars, didn't go down well. Is death less of a taboo in Britain? So, I'll give him the benefit of the doubt about the sexpol, and look out for him next time he's in Britain. Hopefully he won't have joined Buddy, Eddie, Janis, Sid, Jim and the gang by then.

**Rob La Frenais**

## Split Britches Oval House

An unseen commère announces 'An absurd drama of ridiculous people' sonorously cataloguing a dozen or so 'internationally known vaudeville stars' who will be joining us throughout the evening. When the three Split Britches troop on, led by Lois Weaver in relentlessly cheerful Salvation Army sergeant guise, we know somehow they won't be coming. This hilarious and unlikely trio look as if they're living out their faded fantasies on some ghastly M.S.C. scheme for retired entertainers, condemned to touring interminably their version of 'Beauty and the Beast' round shabby middle-American church

halls. We settle down with some trepidation to an evening of edification and spiritual enlightenment.

Split Britches are New York based, arising out of the late Spiderwoman company, with a strong commitment to playing to women and about women. The other show they've brought over, 'Split Britches', looks as through a microscope, at the lives of three women in tough 1940's Virginia. Beauty and the Beast turns the microscope the other way around, magnifying three vaudeville performers to fill an entire continent.

The whole show is the tacky end of the American dream, where everyone wants to be a star but never gets beyond the bathroom mirror. Emerson wrote 'America is a country of young men'. Split Britches are busy rewriting a country populated by outrageous weirdos, misguided fanatics and sad losers', and in that, we might think, it's not a lot different from another country we could name.

The storyline has by this time become no more than a peg on which to hang individual and corporate fantasies, they float in and out of persona at will, to get one over on each other or on the audience with whom they have set up an immediate rapport, leaving us defenceless against abuse and susceptible to appeals to our better judgment.

Deborah Margolin, playing a manic rabbi, veers between an almost religious belief in her role as Beauty's father and desperate assaults on the audience for sitting through such stuff. Occasionally she relieves his/her suffering with furious bouts of activity on the piano, looking like a deranged beetle as she pounds away at the keys while they sing harmonious versions of totally irrelevant songs like 'Kansas City Kitty' or Lois Sergeant Rutledge quavers 'Do you know the way to San José?'; secure in her belief that she can really sing, despite all indications to the contrary. The rabbi gains further alleviation of pain by cracking appalling jokes as a Jewish stand-up comedian when the enactment of the story becomes too much for him to bear.

The fairy story becomes a reality that none of the three can face, each constantly escaping back to their own dreams. Peggy Shaw as eighty-four year old Gusie Umberger is vaguely unhappy about being cast in male roles, but still maintains a desire to play James Dean. She is cut off halfway through miming to a record of 'It's Impossible' by Sinatra and wanders off to yet another bit part as messenger or the sister who isn't beautiful or the wise Beast whose outer ugliness conceals true Beauty, warning us against being taken in by the schmalz.

Split Britches invest their victims with a desperate eagerness, as of drowning performers clutching at the audience to get them out of this mess, but we're too busy laughing to even hold out a feeble hand, and it's too late, they've floated away, locked in a perpetual embrace. Each attempts to scale the heights, but inevit-

ably discovers the gold is tarnished, the dream is insubstantial. Our beliefs are undercut

'Bet you thought Reagan got shot/

They did it in a video workshop' and plaster saints lie crumbling amongst the paper castles and the plastic rose. We all join in rapturously to choruses of 'Is that all there is to Alive?' and won't let them go without encores and leave edified and spiritually enlightened and wonder how, and why.

**Stella Hall**

## Michael Upton and Peter Lloyd-Jones

### Air Gallery

I didn't think that I would ever have to sit through a performance like Dialogue 2, by Michael Upton and Peter Lloyd Jones, again in my life. Two superannuated (male) art lecturers making 'meaningful' gestures with tissue paper, a marble and a wine glass presented a spectacle that justified any possible criticism of performance art that could ever have been made. Carefully picking up pieces of tissue, laying them along the floor and then **actually picking them up in exactly the same way** over a period of about 15 minutes per action is but one of the components of this work that I shall not bother to describe in detail. This outrage combined well with the arid atmosphere of the Air basement, already for no definable programming reason perpetuating itself as a 'dead' space for performance, a white-walled draughty sepulchre for live art, with a curious and monotonous aural illusion of traffic noise from Rosebery Avenue transmitting itself mysteriously through a ventilation shaft to punctuate the vapid movements of the pair.

Perhaps the trestle table should have been a warning, but I ignored it, sitting as I did near the front, barring all modes of escape. In my experience, whenever a trestle table is brought on the scene there is always going to be some pompous fool with a receding hairline with his foot on one of the dustier rungs of the art historical ladder, using 'basic' materials, to illuminate some obscure lump of conceptual jargon.

The only person with whom I have compared notes about this performance was a woman, herself a performance artist, who stayed for five minutes, laughed at me stuck there like an idiot, and left. But something she said to me might be a key to what actually was going on that night. Could it have been that the whole thing was a giant practical joke, a parody of the worst sort of performance, which was explained to the audience during a key central moment? I will never know. Because, as my friend informed me, when she came in I was significantly asleep.

**Rob La Frenais.**



## The Bone Almeida

Imagine a space with a low ceiling and raked seating. Cushions around the bare floorboards of a circular performance area flanked on three sides by a curving red brick wall. Add a simple bamboo fence, a few scattered stones, some primitive pots and pans and a large audience buzzing with anticipation and you have some impression of the setting for a story.

Far from the land of Africa the Almeida Theatre in Islington saw an extraordinary performance of *L'os*, an hour long Senegalese tale adapted by Birago Diop. Acted in a mix of French and English the story revolves around Mor Lam's hatred of Moussa, his 'more than brother' who has reneged on a loan. To avoid the consequences of Mor Lam's passionate anger Moussa surrenders his cow. According to custom and at a time of hardship and hunger the slaughtered animal is shared amongst the village who leave Mor Lam with the precious bone and marrow. His wife, Awa, uses the bone to cook a slow broth which they keep selfishly guarded. When Moussa comes to visit his relatives in the midst of their cooking they panic. Mor Lam goes to fantastic lengths to keep Moussa from the bone. Whilst Awa looks on in amazement he feigns illness, he feigns death and so he is buried alive. Mor Lam meets the Angel of Death and Moussa, upon his betrothal to Awa can only greedily snap out the words 'Ou est l'os?'.

First performed in France by Peter Brook's Paris based international company, *L'os* was originally part of an evening featuring *The Conference of the Birds*. Here, it makes for rather an imbalanced presentation. Made by three of the original performers and accompanied by the invaluable percussion of Toshi Tsushitori, it is led by Malick Bowens who plays Mor Lam. Why should he decide to revive this particular fable for the Almeida? One answer might be that this simple looking tale from Africa is a warning for the comfortable West. The programme note tells us '... the faults of Mor Lam — egoism, rapacity and greed — are in opposition to the firm traditions of fraternity which have always governed the village'. This moral tale is a study of obstinate obsession and its consequences. Mor Lam finally becomes what he pretends to be when he absurdly kills himself through greed.

The 'tradition of fraternity' however tastes more of Paris than Africa and it is ultimately a French style of presentation which dominates. Possessed more by Moliere than by Voodoo magic Bowens sets a high level of energetic concentration in his first outburst that is conducted like electricity from one performer to the other throughout the farce. The eight strong company literally run from one scene to the

end they break the applause and dance to the frenetic rhythm of Toshi's drums. Following his single spring heeled leap as The Angel of Death Clement Masdongar leads the company in backflips and high kicks. Meanwhile, Toshi has come from behind the drums and is jumping and drumming first on the floorboards, then on someone's head. A little more bowing and waving and they have gone.

The brevity of the piece was not in itself a problem. Rather it was that the company attempted to do too many things in too short a time. Ironically, it was the fact that the pace and performance of the spectacle were so charged as to render any sharing of real space with the audience awkward and embarrassing. The man who was drummed on the head was not given the confidence to stand up and take part when invited. This reticence must, in part, be due to the venue for *L'os* is a story for the market place. It needs to be seen outside a theatre framework if it is to go beyond being a show and become a more participatory event. Whatever the company intended they must surely consider the context of a piece as much as the content. As far as this kind of work is concerned the professional package deal our middle scale venues are offering their middle class audiences is a real obstacle.

Aside from the moralistic content and the implications of a theatre setting the audience is offered a full-blooded celebration of life. Images return to the mind like snapshots from some unfortunate wedding party: Toshi's remarkable mobile percussion, Moussa's final greedy words, the knurly white bone clutched against Awa's breast and Mor Lam's first cursing fit whilst manically sharpening a stick. Through the relaxed skill and physical dexterity of the performers these attractions made the visit to the Almeida thoroughly enjoyable.

Andrew O'Hanlon

## An Eccentric Evening Truscott Arms, London

A room full of people talking, many of them idiots. One in particular, poncing about in a white suit, thinks himself extraordinary because he sports a set of plastic Dracula teeth. Somebody ought to kick his fucking head in. An idiot with a beard and flared trousers starts bellowing through Bob Cobbing's set from his own volume of poetry. Why not? This is art, anarchy, free expression, excessively boring. Lol Coxhill plays his famous saxophone exactly as you'd expect. Horribly. A Scottish gentleman reads well from William McGonagall, stopping every second stanza to tell us how much he hates the bastard English. Commendable, but I'd like to see an English bloke try and do that in Scotland. John Hegley can't be heard; well, he could be, but no one can be bothered to listen. This is what we're here

for, isn't it? To talk and drink and get on each others nerves. My turn. I get up. I can't be heard either. I get down. Ian Hinchcliffe, dressed like a gangster, screams for a bit which is o.k. then up jumps Lol and Bob and Dave and a drummer and a piano player and Christ almighty what a row. I go to the bar downstairs. Standing at the bar is Bill Millis who organised the whole thing. Ha ha ha. I chat with friends and drink. The man sitting next to me a) puts on his jacket upside down and b) takes offence at our jokey remarks. I think he wants a fight. Hurray! Somebody's just poured a pint of beer over the bloke in the white suit. The pub can't take any more of our money so now they're throwing us out. I go back upstairs. The landlord is furious. Somebody's ruined a pot plant and (perhaps) the piano. 'This', he bellows, 'is my home'. I'm fucking glad it isn't mine.

I can't tell you what an unbelievably horrible evening this was. John Dowie

## The Farndale Avenue Townswomens Guild Dramatic Society Theatre Space

Well they've done it again! The Farndale Ladies have come up trumps with another riproaring comedy that swept into town direct from the Edinburgh Festival. There were laughs galore in this merry romp as intriguing businessmen and furtive lovers capered and colluded in a salute to the time honoured tradition of the French farce. The tears rolled down my cheeks as all the old chestnuts of mistaken identities and wrong bedrooms were taken out and dusted down to delight a packed audience in the tiny space of the Theatre Space theatre.

Despite considerable problems with the scenery and technical cues, the plucky cast soldiered on to give the paying public what they've always wanted: a stiff dose of good old fashioned entertainment. All credit must go to Erika Poole who stepped in at the last minute to take the part of Mr. Parrot. Her having to read the part from the script in no way detracted from a winning performance. Deborah Klein struck the right note in the haughty role of Mrs Garret and talented Janet Sate gave her best as Mrs Barret while delighting us with a provocative cameo as Fifi, the French maid. Special mention must go to the versatile Julian Clary who managed the parts of both Mr and Mrs Carrot with all the panache of an old trouper. David McGillivray and Walter Zerlin's fast moving script soon had the better of me, I must confess, but all was not lost as the laughs came thick and fast in this snappy production. Coming up with a 'mise-en-scene' that would have had Brian Rix wishing he'd waited a few years before hanging up his



trick braces, these boys did the Farndale Ladies proud with young David not only directing as well but also taking the stage himself in the leading role of Mr Barret. This was a teeth-gritting performance that must have had a lot of people wondering if he's thought of doing this sort of thing professionally.

It's good to see a play that gives you honest no-holds-barred laughter without any intellectual hoo-hah. Ladies, je vous remercie tres bien! Encore une fois? Mais oui!

(Messrs McGillivray and Zerlin's essay into the dynamics of populist entertainment forms provides a rare example of stylistic satire conceived and executed with consummate skill and planning. It may be a truism to say that in order to parody something, one must first be supremely skillful at it but this company vindicate this platitude handsomely. Taking the model of a French farce and casting themselves in the roles of an amateur dramatic society performing it, they develop the scenario to the point where absurdity becomes absurd and cut adrift in a doubly ludicrous world, the spectator can only gleefully cling to the lifeline that is the laughter of acceptance. The French nuance seems singularly appropriate, conjuring as it does the French

concern with the crisis of meaning as revealed in the novels of J.-P. Sartre and the dramaturgies of E. Ionesco. This play is indeed an elegant entree in the dinner party celebrating Unreason.)

Phil Hyde

## Letters

Dear Performance Magazine,

Regarding the Eccentric Enterprises evening at the Truscott Arms (see reviews, John Dowie). There was some criticism that I let 'things' get out of hand. That there should have been a stage manager or at least a compere. The event no more needed a stage manager than it needed a floor manager, door manager, or usherette. 'Things' are placed in such a state that they manage themselves and progress on their own momentum. It's not Eccentric Enterprises for nothing.

By the time John Dowie performed in his inimitable manner, the audience were not in a typically passive state, but were

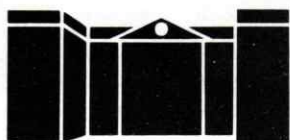
spontaneous and could be classed as a performance audience. The climax came with an intense performance by the irrepressible Ian Hinchliffe, ably assisted in an engaging duet by a pot plant. They were joined eventually by Lol and fellow musicians and a crescendo was reached with sound poets and some of the audience ascending the stage to provide some interesting harmony singing. It all ended in a haywire fashion with artists and audience moving into a dynamic interaction.

I feel it necessary to give a special mention to the manager of the Truscott Arms, Brian Lee, who gave an excellent Fawltly Towers performance as an irate pub manager going berserk over the odd behaviour of the performance audience, and on losing control of the Colonels Room subsequently lost control of himself and ended up pounding the bar screaming 'beasts' and 'animals'. I made a victorious exit with the performance pot plant over my shoulder.

There have been attempts in the past to understand what constitutes performance art, not least Jeff Nuttalls contribution in Performance No. 8 and more recently by Roland Miller in the last issue, No. 19. I hope the above evening was a contribution to that understanding.

Bill Millis

School Lane  
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# National Performance Listings

## Bristol

### Arnolfini

Info: 0272 299191

No events until February. Video library open including tapes by Hall, Critchley, Brakwell, Layzell, Marshall, Vida, Partridge, Littman.

## Cardiff

### Chapter Arts Centre

Info: 0222 396061

December 13-14: Brith Gof in Blodeuwedd. The legendary tale of the Woman of Flowers who turned into an owl. Welsh language.

December 16-22: Paupers Carnival in Twilight in the Court of the Sun, a celebration of the turning of the year, with music, dancing, and ritual.

February 1-5: Bob Carroll makes the Cardiff Dirt Show, with the Pioneers, Belinda Neave, and local music co-ordinated by Dave Sulzer.

## London

### Air Gallery (LVA at Air)

Info: 01 278 7751

January 10-29: Video Installation Show. With Aayamaguchi, Eylath, Hall, Hartney, Hawley, Keane, Krikorian, Littman, Mori, Savage, Schutter. Illustrates the variety of ways in which artists are currently expanding the language of video.

Anyone interested in showing performance, video, tape/slide and other time based media in the spring at Air should contact LVA at 01 734 7410.

### Apples and Snakes

Info: 01 223 7031

Poetry Cabaret continues every Saturday at the Adams Arms, Conway Street, London W1. Attila the Stockbroker (see reviews), Controlled Attack etc etc

### B2

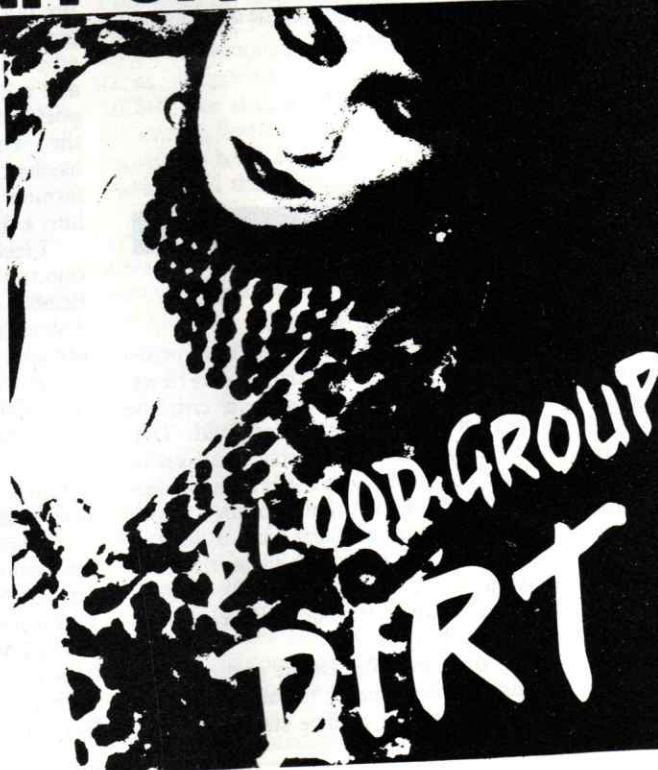
Info: 01 488 9815

Every Sunday, events unconfirmed, a mixture of the most radical in live art, video, and film. Continuation depends on funding.

### Cockpit

Info: 01 402 5081

Bloodgroup in Dirt. 'Composed as a series of "acts", the piece revolves around the building and breaking of fetishistic images. Disguises of femininity are assumed and discarded, creating a landscape of clichés disturbed by incongruity. Action is interrupted by other media, returning constantly to the theme of women's function as performers in art and life.'



## Drill Hall

Info: 01 402 5081

December 16 onwards. The Impersonators by Jack Lansly, with Betsey Gregory, Vincent Meehan, and Sylvia Hallet.

'Drawing on a wide range of performance skills the piece examines the world of Victorian music hall, and in particular the lives of male impersonators such as Vesta Tilley and Hettie King who were so popular at the turn of the century, revealing the glamour and the drudgery of their roles as female working class entertainers. The story of Jekyll and Hyde forms the basis of the piece, but the familiar Victorian melodrama is turned on its head in order to explore the stark contradictions of Victorian sexuality, and build an ambiguous imagery around impersonation both male and female.'

### ICA

Info: 01 930 0493

### Gallery

Before It Hits The Floor. Works by Glenys Johnson, Eric Bainbridge, Tony Bevan, Derek Morris. Also sculpture by Malcolm Poynter (see theatre).

### Theatre

To December 4: That's Not It in By George.

December 7-23: Rational Theatre and Malcolm Poynter in Orders of Obedience. See feature in this issue.

January 11-22: Impact Theatre in Useful Vices. 'Here the language was elaborate and precise. It was the academic language of the anthropologist and the language of

London's underworld — as sharp, colourful and threatening as a broken bottle of Bass jabbed glittering into the air... the rites of the East End gangster as strange and terrifying as those of the South American head hunter. It was a chilling evening in every way.' (Performance 18)

### Oval House

Info: 01 735 2786

December 14-22: Theatre of Fantasy in The Dawn of Dusk.

January 12-16: Model Institution. Installation by Helen Chadwick.

Reconstruction with architecture and sound of a DHSS office.

January 19-23: Clive Pottinger in Apocalyptic Uprising.

January 26-30: British Events in The Island.

Also: A Kick in the Pants by Dave Stephens. Highly recommended performance by resourceful and energetic stand-up artist.

### London Musicians Collective

Info: 01 722 0456

Regular music and live art events at The Early Club (Fridays), Communications Club (Sundays) and the Club Night (Thursdays).

### Riverside Studios

Info: 01 748 3354

Until December 5: Kantor's Ou Sont Les Neiges D'Antan?

December 7-12: The Graeae Theatre Company in M3 Junction 4.

December 13-19: Festival week. Various events.

### The Slammer

Info: 01 499 0760

Richard Strange's new perfor-

mance cabaret. With the Event Group, Liz Finch etc. etc. First reports promising. At Gullivers, 11 Down St, W1.

### Theatre Space

Info: 01 836 2035

V. wide programme of theatrical performance. Dates unconfirmed, ring for details.

## Liverpool

### Bluecoat Gallery

Info: 051 709 5689

December 2-7: Urban Kisses —

NY exhibition — John Ahearne, Mike Glier, Ken Goodman, Keith Haring, Robert Longo, Judy Rifka and Cindy Sherman (see reviews).

## Manchester

### Radiator — Amazing Tales

Info: 061 224 0020

December 9-10: Impact Theatre in Useful Vices. (See ICA for preview).

December 11: Amazing Tails — Party plus performance.

December 18: Frankie Armstrong, Leon Rosselson and Roy Bailey. 'Well known and rare songs, marital diaries, lonely hearts, and quotations from the British Medical Journal and the works of Barbara Cartland.'

## Newcastle

### Basement Group

Info: 0632 614527

December 4: Val Timmis. Disco installation.

December 8-11: Nigel Rolfe.

Series of four nightly performances called The Jungle.

December 15: Peter Davis. Administration Works. All day performance.

January 22: Fiona Templeton: Performance.

January 29: Elizabeth Koznian-Ledward — Films.

## Nottingham

### Midland Group

December 3-4: Conference —

Black Artists — White Institutions. Includes, on December 4,

Ekome — West African dance and drumming.

December 10: Alterations — Steve Bresford, Peter Cusak, Terry Day, David Toop.

December 17-18: Paul B. Davies in Brogue Male (See reviews).

January 6-7: TNT in 1945.



## ICA THEATRE

Rational Theatre / Malcolm Poynter

### ORDERS OF OBEDIENCE

7 - 23 Dec

### PRESS GANG

Christmas / New Year Rock Week

31 Dec - 8 January

Impact Theatre present

### USEFUL VICES

11 - 22 Jan

## ICA CINEMATHEQUE

### SIXTIES TELEVISION

1 - 5 Dec

Barney Platts-Mills

### HERO plus BRONCO BULLFROG

7 - 19 Dec

Valie Export's

### INVISIBLE ADVERSARIES

12 - 23 Jan

## ICA EVENT

ELLEN STEWART of

La Mama talks with

Francoise Grund

Fri 3 Dec at 1.00

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